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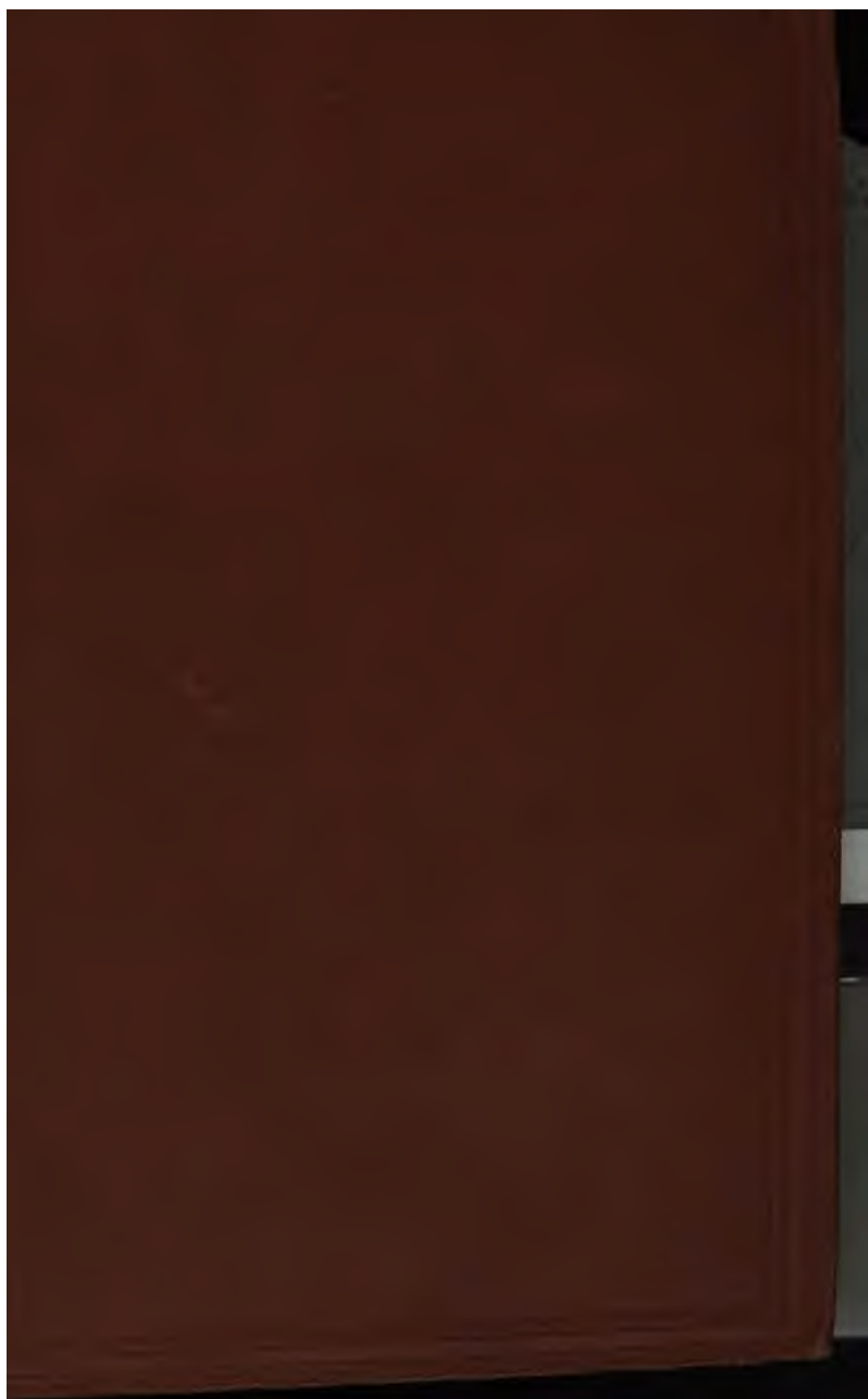
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SILCOTE OF SILCOTES.



# SILCOTE OF SILCOTES.

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "RAVENSHOE," "THE HILLIARS AND THE BURTONS," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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# SILCOTE OF SILCOTES.

## CHAPTER I.

BUT FINDING THEMSELVES RATHER COMFORTABLE, DAWDLE  
ABOUT THEIR EXECUTION.

"How do I look?" said the Squire to Mrs. Thomas, as they walked together up and down the hall, waiting for the arrival of Miss Lee.

"You don't look as well as I expected. You look something like a very pugnacious Quaker, and still more like a prize-fighter who has turned Quaker. The change is not a success."

"It was your suggestion."

"I am aware of it, but the cleverest of us make



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which had been allowed for purposes to represent on earth the real article with the gold-topped dressing-bag. Nothing remained of the old one but her splendid beauty, her old independent ways which enabled her to do without a companion, and a habit of looking somewhat steadily at any person, either male or female, whom she wished to examine, without always considering what their thoughts on the subject might be: which last habit made some folks call her bold-looking. These were the only remains now visible of the periwinkle-and-policeman period.

The Squire—who *was* a gentleman, or, at all events, believed himself to be so—was greatly to be pitied on this occasion. He had been carefully warned by his daughter-in-law that Miss Lee—whatever she *might* have been at one time, however much she might have degraded herself by being a governess in the Silcote family—had been born and bred a lady, and was now a very fine lady indeed. Silcote, with the continually-growing, sneaking consciousness on him of having made a fool of himself for nearly forty years, remembered that he had not met a lady for all that time in familiar intercourse. He had cast it over in his mind how he

should behave to her, and had come to the conclusion that it should be the Grandison heavy father, with a dash of the frank old English country gentleman. He had dressed for the part, and had so far rehearsed the part as to put his hands in his waistcoat pockets, stretch his legs apart, and feel himself prepared, when the emergency came, to talk in a voice like that of Mr. Paul Bedford, in what is called, I believe, a "genteel part." He had dressed for that part under his daughter-in-law's directions, and thought that he could get through it very well; but, just as he was, so to speak, going to walk on the stage, this faithless woman had taken all the wind out of his sails, and utterly ruined his nerve, by telling him that he looked like a prize-fighting Quaker: which might be true, but was not agreeable.

Still he determined to go through with his *rôle*. Feeling as if he was dressed in his butler's clothes, he advanced to the carriage-door to receive Miss Lee. And it may seem curious to an unthoughtful person, Miss Lee *took* him for his butler, looked calmly over the top of his head, handed him her hundred guinea travelling-bag, dismounted, and said—

"Show my people where to put my things when



they come. Take that *couvre-pieds* out of the carriage, will you? Don't let it go into the stable-yard. Are your master, or Mrs. Morgan, at home?"

For Mrs. Morgan was not yet announced as Mrs. Thomas Silcote.

This little *contretemps* put the Squire at his ease and in good humour immediately. Mrs. Thomas heard the dialogue, and joined in the joke.

"My master is at home, Miss," said the Squire, "as also is Mrs. Morgan. There are no further orders, Miss?"

"I think not," said Miss Lee. "My man is to go into the steward's room, not into the servants' hall. My maid, of course, goes into the housekeeper's room. That is all, I think. Where is your mistress—I mean, where is Mrs. Morgan? Do these great dogs, which your master chooses to keep, bite?"

"No, Miss," said Silcote; "do nothing but sleep now. Sometimes they get the steam up sufficiently to bark, but not often."

"Drive them back. My dear creature" (to Mrs. Thomas who approached), "how are you? Make the butler drive these dogs away. And where is Grand-

père le Terrible? And how is *he* getting on? And how are you?"

"Drive your dogs off, butler," said Mrs. Tom, laughing, "and come in, my dear. This butler here is a character, and we allow him all kinds of liberties. You must know him better. I assure you he is a character."

"He looks very stupid," said Miss Lee, not intending him to hear her; but he heard her notwithstanding. His eyes twinkled with fun (excuse a worn-out old simile, it will serve our purpose), and he was going to say something funny, but did not, because Mrs. Thomas anticipated him.

"He is very stupid, my dear," she said aloud. "His stupidity is a plague to us. But ought you not to see Silcote?"

"I suppose I must. I dread it of all things, but I suppose I must, sooner or later. He has a dreadful tongue, I am told."

"He has a terrible tongue. It is a terrible thing to offend Silcote. Here he is."

Silcote came up, and bowed to Miss Lee. "Bless you, sir," she said, "I always thought that you were

such a terrible person. I don't fancy that I shall be a bit afraid of you. I took you for the butler."

"My bark is worse than my bite, Miss Lee."

"He is all bark and no bite," said Mrs. Thomas.

"And I have a dutiful daughter-in-law, Miss Lee, who holds me up to ridicule on every occasion," said Silcote.

"And he has a tongue which does not always tell the exact truth," said Mrs. Thomas. "I never hold him up to ridicule, save when he makes himself ridiculous."

"Do you know," said Miss Lee, "that you two people seem to me already to spar a great deal too much?"

"We shall finish our sparring when we are both in the churchyard, but our love will live on," said Silcote.

"That may be," said Miss Lee, "but I don't like sparring myself. If you go on eternally wearing at the outside edge of love, you may get to the love some day, and kill *that*. I don't say that it will happen between such a pair of rhinoceroses as you two; I don't think it ever will. But it is a bad habit, this sparring. I am going to live with you, and I wish

to say that you ought to leave it off towards one another, and certainly never try it on me."

"But we love one another, the father and I," said Mrs. Thomas.

"You do at present. You have not seen one another much, you know, and you have both had your troubles. You have been thrown together with every chance of being hearty, mutually assistant friends for life. And I come here, and I have not been ten minutes in the house before I find you whetting your tongues against one another, to see which tongue is sharpest. Believe me that it is not well."

"You speak well, cousin," said Mrs. Thomas. "Where did you learn this?"

"Have you studied shrewdness of tongue, that you have lost shrewdness of brain? I have told you everything."

"You mean Arthur."

"I mean Arthur. I loved that man until he wore through the outside crust of my love. I submitted to him and flattered him—what could I do else? he was the noblest creature I had ever seen—until he wore through the outside crust of my love with his bitter

sharp speech, and got to the core of my love, a love which came from the admiration of his innate nobleness; I can express it no better. My soul was his for a time; what did he do with it? Everything I did wrong was wrong without excuse: everything I did right was done from contemptible motives, which he analysed in the bitterest manner."

And the good-humoured gentle girl made peace between them, kept this object before her, and fought for it. There was some sort of tacit arrangement between her, her cousin, and the Squire that she was to stay on there. It was one of those arrangements which seem made by the instinct more than the intellect: I doubt if the arrangement ever got as far as articulate words. Yet something to this purpose must have passed between her and Mrs. Thomas, when the latter lady presented herself to claim her moiety of the property. Probably they only fell in love with one another, as women do. But, when Miss Lee came to Silcotes, she brought an enormous number of boxes, and, after having heard that Arthur was ordered away for his health, put her servants in London on board wages, and sent for some more boxes. And meanwhile

there grew in all three of them an indisposition to hurry themselves in moving.

The Squire and his daughter-in-law found out the very first day what she was. A gentle, genial, amiable, and clever woman, with plenty of character, and a most charming temper. Before the week was out both these rugged souls had felt the influence of her gentleness and her beauty, and ceased their rude words towards one another. They broke out at times, but Miss Lee, with her kindly laughter, laughed them both down. For what can the most radically rugged nature do against a splendidly beautiful woman, *beautifully dressed and jewelled* (that is not the least part of it, or *Sartor Resartus* was written in vain), who shows the geniality of radicalism with none of its acerbity? She was as radical and as uncompromising as either of them, but she was never in the least degree Berserk. She saw that the old wild spirit was still in both of them; in Silcote always ready to break first, in Mrs. Thomas at times difficult to repress. She saw her work before her, and she did it. She calmed and quieted them both. They had both, particularly Mrs. Thomas, far stronger natures than hers. She knew it,

and she knew that her strength lay in gentleness: and she used that strength, and did her work well.

Did she still love the man who had first taught her and trained her; or, to put it in another way, had taught her to teach and train herself? Did she still love Arthur? Yes, not to make a mystery of the story, she did; let her say what she liked. But she knew Arthur's honest pride so well, that she knew that he would never come to *her*. She was ready to go to *him*. Only she waited until she could find out, by a side wind, whether his love for her had lasted. For she knew that he had loved her once. He had behaved ill and selfishly to her, but she knew that he had loved her once. A woman, they say, generally knows when a man loves her.

Miss Lee had arrived at Silcotes on Monday. By Saturday her influence had been felt; and the other two had got to love her. Still there had been no explanations, beyond some talk about their mutual inheritance, which mainly turned on a conspiracy between them to deprive the lawyers of their natural rights, and avoid law. Silcote himself was funny over this part of the business, and was in favour of

a friendly suit between the cousins, for the benefit of the lawyers. He himself, he said, would take the brief of either party; and, give him his choice of attorneys, would, for a small bet, leave either of them or both of them without a farthing. He, however, ultimately managed the law part of their little business for them most admirably.

On the Saturday evening Mrs. Thomas observed to Miss Lee, "I have ordered the carriage for you to-morrow morning."

"The carriage! why?" said Miss Lee.

"To go to Marlow. There is no mass at Newby, and there will not be for all the next month. Father Protheroe is ill, and——"

"Mass!" interrupted Miss Lee; "what do I want at mass?"

"My dear, I thought you were Catholic; I beg your pardon," said Mrs. Thomas.

"We call ourselves Catholic, certainly," said Miss Lee, "when we don't call ourselves Anglo-Catholic, which somebody used to tell me was only more ridiculous. I am not a Romanist."

"I thought you were."



"Nothing of the kind. I am what they would call very High Church, I suppose; and you are not innocent there. I am going to church with you and Silcote to-morrow morning. Silcote goes to church, of course?"

"Silcote would see himself a long distance off first," remarked that gentleman. "I may be a brute, but I am not a humbug. Boxed up in an apology for a sheep-pen for an hour and a half, and then hearing a man in a box talking platitudes which you can't contradict for another half-hour. No!"

Mrs. Thomas was preparing herself to go about with him on this view of the matter, when Miss Lee waved her hand and interposed.

"But you are coming with us to-morrow morning, Silcote," she said.

"Did I not say that I would see myself a long way off first?" he answered.

"Yes," said Miss Lee, "but then you know that involves an absurdity; because you know you could not possibly see yourself at a long way off, and you will come with us to-morrow morning, won't you?"

"To hear old Sorley's platitudes?" said Silcote.

"To worship with your fellow-Christians in the first place," said Miss Lee. "That can do you no harm; and as for Sorley's platitudes, they are good ones. Old as the hills, true as the Gospel from which they are taken."

"I know more than that old fool does."

"Possibly. The greater your condemnation," said Mrs. Thomas. "The man is, to a certain extent, objectionable to me; because my formulas are High Church, and his are almost Low. But compare his life to yours. How much does he take from the parish?"

"Well, *I* have the great tithe. It came to me with Silcotes, you know, and it has been paid for."

"Not by you," said Mrs. Thomas. "What does the Vicar take from the parish?"

"96*l.* 4*s.* 8*d.* last year," said Silcotes.

"And what did he pay his curate?" demanded Miss Lee.

"I don't know and don't care," said Silcotes. "The curate drives about in a dog-cart; and has got one of the Joneses for his groom. He is all right."

"And what do you take for the great tithe, Sil-

cote?" said Mrs. Thomas; "and what do you give to the charities, Silcote?"

"Oh, hang it all, I'll go to church if you will only leave me alone. *I'll* go to church, if it is only because your superstition prevents your talking there. Every one will laugh at me, and the women will giggle at one another's bonnets. But I will do any thing, if you will only keep your tongues quiet."

So Silcote went to church with them; and they felt, at least so Mrs. Thomas said, as if they had been leading about one of Elisha's she-bears, to dance in respectable places. But they got through with it, and the congregation were not very much scandalized, for he was the biggest landlord in these parts, and had forty thousand a year. At the Belief he sat down, instead of turning to the altar, until Mrs. Thomas poked him with her Prayer-book, upon which he demanded, in a tongue perfectly audible, and particularly well "understood of the people," as the Article goes, "what the dickens he had to do now?" He got into complications with his hassock, and Miss Lee's hassock, and used what his enemies said were oaths against footstools. He had got it into his head

that it was the right thing to take an umbrella to church, and he leant his (which he had borrowed from his butler) against Miss Lee's. They fell down in the middle of the Litany, and he looked as innocent as he could, but kept one eye on the congregation, and one on Miss Lee, as if to say that this was not the first time that that young woman had done it, and that you must not be hard on her.

But they got Silcote to church between them, these two women; and knew that they had done right in doing so. But neither of them were inclined to try it again. It was not a success. After lunch that day Miss Lee told Mrs. Thomas that she looked ten years older than she did in the morning. Mrs. Thomas said that she supposed she did. It would not do, this taking of Silcote to church.

"We can't rouse him, you know, cousin," said Miss Lee, after Mrs. Thomas's church experiment. "We must leave it all to God."

"I wish we could get him away from here," said Mrs. Thomas, in a subsequent conversation. "He will never get quit of his old folly with all the ministers to it still round him, with his dogs, his horses, his

carriages, his bloodhounds, and all the rest of it; the man will forget his only purpose in life, and remain as foolish as ever. I myself should become a perfect fool if I remained much longer in this atmosphere of perfectly useless ostentation, and I want to go to Switzerland and see after my boy. And this sort of thing is doing *you* no good, you were never made for the silly and senseless routine of a rich English country house."

"I don't think I was," said Miss Lee. "I could get on very well in London with ragged-schools, Sunday-schools, turn about at the hospital, district-visiting, daily service, and so on; but I can't stand this. This senseless, purposeless ostentation is too much for me. Possibly all my work among the London poor arose from an artificial and unhealthy state of mind, craving for excitement. I will give you in all that. But at all events one *did* do *some* good."

"You did a great deal."

"Then a great deal remains to be done. But I can't stand this. I see no chance of organizing any work here at present, and yesterday, while he was in

his best mood, he told me that he intended going more into county society, and proposed going to the Reading Ball to begin with."

"That will never do for us," said Mrs. Silcote.

"It won't do for *me*. You and I are spoilt for that sort of thing. In London last year I was not introduced by any one; no one knew me or cared for me; but I had my little parties in Curzon Street, and Mr.—, caustic shrewd old man as he is, told me that they were in his opinion the pleasantest in London. The people who came were all people connected with the charities to which I subscribed. The queerest people you ever saw in your life: but so fresh, and so much in earnest. You have seen society?"

"From the still-room," said Mrs. Silcote. "But I know it. They little think how we know them and laugh at them too."

"Well, I have not seen society, and have never heard anything about it, until I came here, and returned the visits which people have paid us since Silcote has turned respectable. And I don't like it. It seems to me such ghastly folly. They talk of

nothing but where they were last, and where they are going next. Lady Burton asks me if I am going to the Newby Ball, and, when I tell her, in the quietest way, that I do not go to balls in Lent, she talks across me to Lady Turton, about who is likely to be there, and so on. I don't like your society."

"*This* is not society," said Mrs. Silcote; "there is not a house within miles where you can meet a single person from the world. Believe the still-room: there are county houses and country houses. You must not talk of county society or of country houses here. There are neither the one nor the other here. This is semi-detached villa society. *Some one* told me once that at a really good country house, in a part of the country strange to him, he, arriving late, as a stranger, knew nothing of the people who were there: but, getting confidential after dinner with the man who was next him, whom he took for a brother officer, found that he was the Secretary of State for Ireland, and that two other members of the Ministry were at the table. That is what society may be in the country. What it is here you have seen."

"It won't do," said Miss Lee.

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Silcote. "My own brother is rebelling against this style of thing, and wishes he was back in the Crimea, or anywhere. And he is a very patient man. I have plagued him hard enough to know that. As you say, it won't do."

"We must get the old man abroad," said Miss Lee.

"Yes, if we can do it. He is a very difficult man, you know."

"Well, at all events this won't do," said Miss Lee. "I have got into that state of mind that I should like to sell my travelling bag and give the money to the poor; that is rather a Colney Hatch sort of notion, is it not? How on earth the man has gone on like this for forty years and kept out of Bedlam I can't conceive. However, I have one pilgrimage to make, and there, we *must* get him abroad. I shall not be long over it. How far is it to St. Mary's, and how does one get there?"

"Why do you want to go there?" asked Mrs. Silcote.

"To see my dear old master, Algernon Silcote: one of the finest gentlemen who ever lived. In the old



times, cousin, when you were no richer than I was, that man did all he could for me. He gave me all he could afford—the wages of a housemaid; but he gave me with it a delicate respect which he would not have given to the finest duchess in the land. Algernon Silcote's voice will never be heard in this world; he is a silent, long-enduring man."

"You should not have waited for him to write," said Mrs. Silcote.

"I acknowledge it," said Miss Lee. "You are right. But you brought me into this atmosphere of frivolity and neglect of duty, and so don't you see that the blame rests on your shoulders after all?"

She went at once. She was not long gone: only three days. Mrs. Silcote had spent these three days in battling with the Squire about the propriety of their going abroad. The Squire, who was in one of his unaccountable moods again, was enraged at her proposing to him the very thing he had set his heart on doing. He said that he would be somethinged if he gave way to any such feminine folly. He wanted to know if she was mad; she said she wasn't, and he said that he wasn't sure about that. She said that,

as far as she had observed, he was not sure about anything. He asked did she want to insult him? She said that she would take time before she answered that. Then he asked her if she wanted to drive him mad, to which she answered that he didn't want much driving. He asked her whether Berkshire society was not good enough for her, and she said No; that she had a foolish fancy for interchanging ideas with reasonable beings. He asked her what the deuce she wanted to go abroad for; she answered, to clear his brains. He asked her was not Silcotes good enough for her, and she answered not half good enough. Then he reverted to his original proposition, that he would see them all further first, and immediately afterwards began to think whether he had not better get a new portmanteau.

Silcote and his daughter-in-law, however, had their two tongues going at one another in the very way against which Miss Lee had warned them. They were sitting over the fire in the hall, with the stupid great dogs round them, when there came in the young footman who was James's friend, and they stopped their sparring.

Crimson plush breeches and white stockings, grey coat and brass buttons, with the Silcote crest on them, if you could see it. The figure of the lad disguised in this way, and on the face of the honest young lad, undisguisable by plush breeches or brass buttons, or any other antiquated ostentatious nonsense whatever, the great broad word "disaster" written in unmistakeable characters.

Mrs. Silcote saw it at once, and rose. The Squire, nursing his ill temper, and framing repartees for his daughter-in-law which he never uttered, saw nothing of it. The footman, with disaster written on his face, only said—

"You are wanted in the housekeeper's room, ma'am."

"Was it her son?" she kept saying as she followed the footman; but she *knew* it was not. When she got to the housekeeper's room, she found only the housekeeper, her brother, and Miss Lee.

"Why have you come home secretly like this, my dear?" she said. "Something has happened: I saw it in George's face."

"Something has happened, and you must break it to

Silcote. at is why I came in secretly and sent for you," said Miss Lee.

"Do you come from Algernon?"

"I do."

"Is he very ill? Is he worse?"

"Algernon is dead! Died last night. I got there too late to see him, and you must break it to —, God save us—James Sugden, go to her. She is going to faint, and she knows you best. Catch her."

James Sugden was ready to catch his sister if she had fallen, but there was no sign of falling about her. When Miss Lee told her dreadful news, Mrs. Silcote had put her two hands up to her head, and had turned round. The only effect was that she had loosened a great cascade of silver hair, and, with that falling over her shoulders, she turned round deadly pale.

"Dead! and with that wicked lie burnt into his noble heart! To die so! And we dawdling and fretting here! Dead! This is beyond measure terrible?"

## CHAPTER II.

UNTIL ONE PERSON AT ALL EVENTS GETS NO BENEFIT  
FROM THEM.

THE spring was cold, late, and wild. The north-east wind had settled down on the land, and had parched it up into a dryness more hard and more cruel than that of the longest summer-drought. The crocuses came up, but they withered; the anemones bloomed, but could not colour; the streams got low, and left the winter's mud to stagnate into zymotic diseases by the margin; the wheat got yellow; the old folks, whose time was overdue, took to dying, and the death-rate in London went up from 1,700 odd to 1,900 odd.

Death, anxious to make up his tale, in anticipation of the healthy summer which was sure to follow on this dry bitter north-easterly spring, garnered all he could.

The old folks who were due to him he took as a matter of course. Threescore and ten was his watchword, and, for those who obstinately persisted in four-score, he hung out foolish scarecrows of old friends younger than they who were dead before them; which scarecrows were in the main laughed to scorn by such of the old folks as lived in the strength of Christ and his victory.

He began to gather children with bronchitis, a sad number,—children whom, if one dare say anything on such a subject, had better have been left; then drunkards, into whose rotten lungs the north-east wind had got—men who were best dead. Then to the houses of ill-fame, where some slept and dreamt that they were picking cowslips in the old meadows, and awoke to find that they were dying utterly deserted, with only a wicked old woman to see them die. Then to the houses of the rich, driving them with their precious ones to Bournemouth or Torquay, and following them there inexorably, till the lately blooming and busy matron became only a wild wan woman, walking up and down, and bewailing her first-born, or the rose of the family. Old Death made up his tale that month,

and the Registrar General acknowledged it in the *Times* duly; but he need not have gone picking about here and there to make up his number. Were not the French, the Austrians, and the Italians grinning at one another with a grin which meant a noble harvest for him? Could he not have waited two months?

And of all places to descend on, for the making up of his number, St. Mary's Hospital! "The healthiest situation," said loud-mouthed Betts, "in all England." Why, yes. A very healthy situation, but old Death came there too. The death-rate had disappointed his expectations, one would think, for he was picking up victims wherever he could. And he picked up one life which Betts and Dora thought was worth all the others put together.

The buildings at St. Mary's had never properly dried, for Betts's work was all hurried—"Brummagem," if you will forgive slang; and the lake had got very much dried up, and reeked a little at night-time at the edges. St. Mary's-the-New was *not* built on the healthiest site in Hampshire. If Betts had consulted a man with some knowledge of physical science, he would have learnt this. On those Bagshot Sands an

isolated piece of undrained clay means scarlet-fever.<sup>1</sup> Still, clay is good for foundations. Consequently this site for the new St. Mary's Hospital had been selected on an unhealthy and isolated piece of clay, which lay in the bosom of the healthful gravel, a little above the lakes. We have no more to do with it than what follows: a scarlet fever tragedy in a school or a training-ship is not any part of our story.

It was the Easter vacation. Arthur, the head-master, had gone away; and the rumours among the servants coincided in one point,—that he had had a fit, and that Mr. Algernon had “found him in it,” and persuaded him to go abroad. Also the rumours coincided in the report that he had resigned his post; and furthermore, in the fact that Mrs. Morgan was not coming back any more.

The cloisters, the corridors, and the chapel were empty and silent. The ripple on the lake went always one way, westward, before the easterly wind, and the lake itself was low in the spring drought, and the bare shores exhaled an unhealthy smell.

<sup>1</sup> Diphtheria also and other diseases of that class; at least so I have been told by a doctor who has worked among them for twenty years.



There were no signs of spring to be seen about St. Mary's. Among heather and Scotch fir woods the seasons show scarcely any change at all, save twice in the year. The clay land, which will bear deciduous trees, shows changes almost innumerable. From the first beautiful purple bloom which comes over the woods when the elm is blossoming into catkins; through the vivid green of the oak of early May; through the majestic yet tender green of June; through the bright flush of the fresh Midsummer shoot; through the quiet peaceful green of summer; through the fantastic reds and yellows of autumn; on again to the calm greys of winter, sometimes silvered with frost and snow;—Nature in the heavier and more cultivable soils paints a never-ending succession of colour studies. And with the aid of changes on the surface of the soil itself; with flowers in their succession; with the bursting green of hedges; with meadows brimful of lush green grass; with grey mown fields; with the duller green of the lattermath; with corn, with clover, with a hundred other fantastic tricks, she, with atmospheric effects, makes these studies so wonderfully numerous, that they appear as inexhaustible in their

variety as games at chess ; otherwise, what would become of the landscape painter ?

But in these "heath countries" she only flashes into gaudy colours twice : that is to say, when the bracken springs in the hollows, and where the ling blooms on the hill. At other times she keeps to the same sombre, seasonless, Australianesque colouring ; sombre masses of undeciduous fir woodland, and broad stretches of brown heath.

Algernon, looking out of the window, said to Dora,—

"Spring must be showing somewhere else, in spite of this easterly wind, but there is no spring showing here. I don't like this place."

"I hope you don't," said Dora. "I should think very little of you if you did : but I console myself with the idea that I was right in thinking, from the very first, that you never would. *I* hate it."

"I thought you liked it at first, my dear," said Algernon. "Why do you hate it now?"

"We are all foolish sometimes, but I hate it now. It is full of boys, and I hate boys," said she.

"But the boys are not here now."

"I know, but the whole place smells of them. And boys smell like sawdust when they are collected in sufficient numbers. And this place smells as sawdusty as ever it can smell."

"It is the smell of building, my love," said Algernon.

"It may be the building, or it may be the boys, but I know that I hate the building, and I hate the boys."

"But you liked James Sugden ; now, as it turns out, James Silcote, and as it appears, your cousin."

"No, I didn't like him," said Dora, "I loved him, which is quite a different matter : and I love him still. Next to you I love him better than any one in the world. And I hate boys."

"A good lad. But you never objected to the boys in Lancaster Square?"

"There were not enough of them together, I suppose. You could know them individually, too ; I liked Dempster, for instance. You can't know boys here, and, collected together, they very much brutalize one another. The house in Lancaster Square never smelt nice, I allow. If they had been long enough in it to make the place smell of sawdust, the smell of roast mutton from the kitchen—which if you remember was

permanent, and not to be put down by the smell of any other cookery—would have extinguished it. But we never ought to have left Lancaster Square.”

“And why, again, Dora?”

“Because we have lost everything. Mr. Betts was tolerable while you were his patron; now he is yours his vulgar old nature is re-asserting itself, and he is getting *intolerable* again. He *was* grateful to you, and I daresay thinks that he is now. But he patronizes you openly. And when I see him doing that I long to slap his face.”

“My dear Dora! You are unladylike, my child.”

“I daresay. Yet I was trained in my manners by one of the first ladies in the land. By Miss Lee, for instance, with her carriage and pair, and her grooms and footmen, and her house in Curzon Street, and her falallallies generally. You naturally urge that Miss Lee, at the time she was condescending enough to undertake my education, was getting herself taught chants by Uncle Arthur in the square, in the dark, not to mention talking with the policeman in the gutter; and had not as yet set up in the business of fine lady. I allow that you are right. She

certainly had *not*. But there is no appeal from her now."

"You must curb that shrewd little tongue of yours, my darling, my only friend, my best beloved."

"Let it run one moment more, father, only one moment. It never told a lie, and it shall be dead, as far as its shrewdness is concerned, towards you at least, for ever. There is another reason why you ought never to have come here."

"And that?"

Out of her prompt little soul came her prompt little answer; though that answer was never given in words. In one moment she had remembered his debts and his failing health, and had determined not to say what was on her tongue. What was on her tongue was in effect this. That, having committed himself to extreme High Church formulas, he had lost prestige by retreating from an outpost like Camden Town, and coming into a scholastic society like St. Mary's, half, or more than half, mediæval in its ways, where he could do as he liked without criticism. She, with her shrewd sharp little Protestant intellect, utterly disagreed with his convictions about ecclesiastical matters (to make short

work of it); but she, like a regular little woman, disliked her father having deserted the post of honour, though she thought he was fighting on the wrong side. She thought all this, but she promptly determined to say nothing about it, and held her tongue, as far as he was concerned.

She only said, "I suppose I am foolish in taking you out for a walk, for your throat is very queer, and you have been talking too much."

"I think you have done the main of the talking," said Algernon.

"Never mind that. And don't get into that wretched habit of arguing, and being sharp, and twisting words to mean what they never were intended to mean. Creation is divided into two great classes,—Silcotes, bantams, and donkeys for one; the rest of the creation for the other. Now I will take you out for a walk, my best of all men, and we will get out of this brown desert, and into cultivated land, and we will see spring together, in spite of the east wind."

"Silcotes, bantams, and donkeys are the first division of the animal creation, are they?" said Algernon to

Dora, while he was wrapping himself up. "You belong to the first division."

"In every respect?" said Dora.

"In every respect," said Algernon.

"Come away, and we will find some primroses," said Dora. And so they went away towards the distant fields and hedgerows, across the brown undrained moorland.

I can give a harrowing death-bed scene! I have seen too many to venture to describe one. Poor old Algernon came back to St. Mary's choking with bronchitis, aggravated by the new cold he had caught hunting primroses in the distant hedgerows with Dora, and died. The last articulate words he spoke through his choking throat were these: "I must write a letter before I die."

And Dora, with grief and consternation in her heart, but with all her brave nerve about her, was able for the occasion. She put the writing materials on the bed, and, although he could not speak, his mind was clear and his hand steady, until he choked and died of suffocation, leaving the letter for her to read.

It went thus—

"MY FATHER,—I used harsh and cruel words to you once on this miserable matter of my mother's honour. I humbly ask your forgiveness. Believing as you did the wicked lie, you could hardly have acted otherwise. But give the rest of your life to clearing the matter up."

"ALGERNON."



### CHAPTER III.

#### THE CONFERENCE ON THE RAMPARTS IS INTERRUPTED BY AN OLD FRIEND.

WITH the cool breeze blowing from Aspern on her face, the Princess turned towards Kriegsthum. She felt that in some way her silly scheming—if it might be called scheming—so obstinately carried out, was unsuccessful; and that Kriegsthum, the well-paid minister of her follies, the agent in all her silly schemes, was face to face with her.

She had come to Vienna, believing that Kriegsthum was so deeply committed to the revolutionary party, to Frangipanni the Italian Constitutionalist on the one hand, and to Boginsky the outrageous Mazzinist on the other, that he dare not follow her into the

lion's paws. She was quite deceived. His was a knight move against a castle; to go to whist, she had played the last trump out, and he had come in with an overpowering suit. Kriegsturm was not inclined to let such an exceedingly well-yielding head of cattle stray out of his pasture; and so, on the strength of his being known to the Austrian police as the most clever, unscrupulous, and best-informed spy in Europe, he had made his peace with the Austrian Government, and followed his dear Princess to Vienna, with a view of "working" the Princess and receiving pay from the Austrian police at one and the same time. So much about him for the present

"Madame has not served me well," he began, when the Princess turned to him. "I only say so much at present. The time may come, if Madame continues her present course of action, when I may say that Madame has served me shamefully and shabbily."

The poor Princess, softened perhaps by the wind from Aspern, began to cry; and to wish, strangely enough, but with a true instinct, that her very objectionable nephew, Arthur, was there, or even old

Miss Raylock, to confront this rascal. But she was all alone, and wept. So Kriegsthurm went on.

“The time may come when I may have to say to Madame that it is hopeless for her to attempt to escape me. That I hold Madame in the hollow of my hand. That I love her she need not be told, but ingratitude of the most traitorous kind may extinguish love. I may have to say all this at some future time; at present I do not. Madame has proposed this secluded meeting herself, knowing that she could not propose a public one; but she will see that I am all-powerful, and that I must be treated with confidence.”

The Princess had not yet got through her softened mood, and was still crying. The fool got contemptuous of her, the most Silcote of the Silcotes—“the incarnation of Silcotism,” as Miss Raylock once said, who ought to know; and in his contempt for her he leaped too quickly to his first object, and began his business exactly at the wrong end.

“I want money, Madame. I am poor.”

She wiped her eyes directly. “You always do want money,” she said. “I wonder what you do with it all. But I have not got any.”

"Madame has sixty thousand pounds' worth of jewellery. I must have some of that."

Had he not himself told Tom Silcote that very night that she would see *him*, Tom, deeply as she loved him, in the workhouse (or to that effect), before she would part with a single stone? Yet this fool and conspirator (are they not now and then convertible terms?) proposed for himself what he would never have proposed for her darling Tom.

An Italian, one would have thought, would never have made such a blunder, and would never have made such a venture. But of what nation was Kriegsthurm again? It was a foolish venture, and the tables were at once turned for a time.

Kriegsthurm proposed to her to touch her sacred accumulations. The attorney blood which was in her from her father's side, and the old English land accumulative blood which was in her from her mother's side, alike rose in rebellion to this demand, flushed her cheek, and, strange to say, passed back to her brain, and set her wits a-going.

And she had been to Italy and seen the theatricalities, and could imitate them on occasions; as

Master Kriegsthurm will bear witness to his dying day. She gave him one instance of this now, and he never asked for another.

They were standing together under a lonely gas-lamp, which was burning steadily within its glass, in spite of the wandering wind which came from Aspern, and they could see one another's faces.

He was confident, bold, and coarse (to refresh your memory after so long, he was a square, coarse-featured man, with a red complexion). Hers was pale, thin, and refined, with the remains of a very great beauty. They stood and looked at one another; he, at least, looked at her until he saw that she was not looking at him, but over his shoulder, at which time he began to feel an uneasy sensation in his back. Still he looked at her steadily.

And her face changed as he watched it. The eyes grew more prominent, the lips parted; she was gazing at something which he dared not turn and face: gazing over his right shoulder, too, most unpleasantly. No one would care to have, say for instance Lady Macbeth, looking steadily over your right shoulder, while you were perfectly conscious that Malcolm's mishap

was not your first offence. The Princess of Castelnovo stared so very steadily over Kriegsturm's right shoulder that she had frightened him out of his wits before she tried her *grand coup*.

All of a sudden she broke out, sharp, shrill, and clear.

"Mind that man! He is going to stab you from behind, and penetrate your lungs. Mind him!"

Kriegsturm, with a loud oath, dashed alongside of her, and began his before-mentioned polyglot system of swearing. We have nothing to do with that, but something with this.

The Princess knew quite well that his life was not perfectly safe here in Vienna, and she had tried to frighten him by pretending to see a democrat, thirsting for his blood, behind him in the dark. She had intended to frighten him, but she frightened herself also a little bit. She never believed that there was a betrayed democrat behind him; she only wanted to scare him. She had only evolved that democrat who was to penetrate Kriegsturm's lungs out of her internal consciousness. Yet, when Kriegsturm had run round behind her for protection, they both heard that

heretofore purely imaginary democrat running away along the ramparts as hard as ever his legs would carry him.

The Princess, though quite as heartily frightened as if she by idly and incredulously saying an old spell had raised the devil, was the first to recover her presence of mind. Kriegsthurm, though a bold man, was as white as a sheet when he again faced her under the gas-lamp, with his eyes squinting over his shoulder. She began—

“Ungrateful man! I have saved your life!”

“I acknowledge it, Madame. Did you see the man?”

“I saw him plainly.”

Oh, Princess! Princess!

“Was he like any one you had ever seen before?” asked Kriegsthurm.

“No,” said she, “a tall dark man with a beard.” This was rather a worse fib than the first one, though she did not know it. The man had no beard, and she *had* seen him before.

“Let us have no recriminations, Madame; I will not even ask you why you distrusted me and fled

from me. For," he added, as his nerve came back, "the spirits have told me that."

She was fond of the man, and had got the whip hand of him through an accident. Her fondness for the man caused her to spare the use of the whip. The revelations of the spirits had been so exceedingly unsatisfactory that even her silly credulity had given way under them, and spiritualism was now among the follies of the past. She was friendly with him.

"Never mind the spirits; and I will tell you why I run away from you. You knew everything about Sir Godfrey Mallory; and you knew, and know, that I was innocent. My brother was a man so fierce and so strict that I feared his anger, particularly after Miss Rayleck had got the power of putting *her* tongue to work about it. I consulted you, and you promised to save my reputation. You then came to me, and told me that you had done so by making Silcote believe that Sir Godfrey's attentions were paid to my sister-in-law, his wife. You remember my despair and horror at such a course, but you pointed out to me that she was too far above suspicion for any breath to tarnish her character; and indeed I believed



you. But, to my infinite wonder and consternation, the poison took hold on my jealous brother's heart, in spite of my open familiarity with poor Godfrey Mallory, whom I liked in a way—you know what a fool I am, at least your pocket does. I dared neither speak nor hold my tongue. Her death lies at the door of my cowardly folly and your villany. And she will be a ministering angel when you and I lie howling."

One is allowed to quote Shakespeare, and so I put Shakespeare's words in her mouth. Her own were fiercer and coarser, for Silcote's sister could be fierce and coarse at times.

"Till very lately, Kriegsthurm, I thought that this was all you had done. The other day when you were dunning me beyond patience for money, and I threatened to appeal to my brother, you told the old horrible story, that you had got my handwriting forged by some woman's hand, accusing that saint of wishing to poison her husband, and had put poison in a place where he could find it. Then, for the first time, I realized that you and I had murdered my sainted sister-in-law's body, and my brother's soul;

and I fled here, where I believed you dared not follow me."

"Madame paid me highly," said Kriegsthurm, "and also treated me kindly. My object was to carry out Madame's wishes most fully. And I did so."

There was a certain terrible truth in the man's defence of himself. There was a large liberal grandeur about his rascality which made him, without all question, the greatest rascal in Europe. The general rule, I believe, in employing a rascal is to promise him his pay as soon as the villany is completed. Such a procedure was utterly unnecessary in the case of Kriegsthurm. Pay Kriegsthurm well first, and then all you had to look out for was that he did not, in his enthusiastic devotion to rascality, outrun his instructions, and compromise *you*. What his real name was, or where he came from, is a thing we shall never know. His name certainly could not have been Kriegsthurm; even in the case of such an arch scoundrel as he was, it is impossible to believe that he would keep his own name. That would have been a stroke of genius with which we cannot credit even him. Dalmatian crossed with Greek

might produce him, did not his German, almost Dutch, *physique* render such a theory entirely impossible.

Yet such entirely noble people as Frangipanni and Boginsky believed in the man; believed, at the very least, that, if he was faithless in most things, he was faithful to them. Conspirators, often at the same time the most honest and the most credulous of men, are not difficult men to deceive. About this man there was a broad radical magnificence of scoundrelism which might have taken in some statesmen, leave alone conspirators.

"We will not dispute further, your Highness," he said, now giving her the title she loved; "I served your interests, and I was paid. I will begin all over again. I want money."

"And I have none," said the Princess, now perfectly confident. "This is a good beginning."

"But your Highness may get money again. What is your object in wanting money?"

"You know. I want it for Tom."

"Use your influence with your brother, and re-instate him as heir of Silcotes. I tell you, and I *know*, that there is no one whom the Squire loves

as he does the Colonel. The Colonel is steady enough now, and has had his lesson. The Squire is quite sick of Arthur, and besides, Arthur has fits, and bullies the old gentleman. I tell your Highness that, if you and I put our wits to work, we can get the Colonel out of this, and safe back to Silcote before the French have crossed the Ticino."

"Are they going to fight, then?" said the Princess eagerly."

"Are they *not*?" said Kriegsturm emphatically. "Do you think *I* don't know? Did I ever leave England before?"

"I cannot have Tom," said the Princess, "in a campaign, he is so rash and audacious. Can you save Tom for me? I cannot do without Tom now; I would part with my opals to save Tom. Kriegsturm, can you save Tom for me?"

"No harm will come to him, your Highness, believe me. He *must* go to the campaign; not only because his character is ruined if he does not, not only because he cannot avoid it if he would, but because one half of my plan consists in his winning back his father's favour by distinguishing himself in it.

"Give me your plan, then."

"I will," said Kriegsthurm. "Now you must allow that the Colonel has a very good notion of his own interests. You can't deny that, your Highness; at least, if you did, your pocket would turn inside out in contradiction."

"I allow it," said the Princess; "Tom is fond of pleasure; and natural, too, at his time of life."

Tom was over thirty, but she always looked on him as a boy.

"I do not exactly allude to his fondness for pleasure, your Highness;" said Kriegsthurm, "I only allude to his perfect readiness to lead an easy life on other people's money. I call attention, *en passant* only, to this amiable little trait in his character, to show that we shall have no difficulty whatever with *him*; that, if he saw any chance of being reinstated at Silcotes, he would give up his career in the Austrian army, his character for personal courage, his chance of salvation, yourself, or the mother that bore him, to attain it."

"Tom certainly has all the persistence of the family in the pursuit of an object," was the way the Princess complacently put it.

"He has. I asked if he would stick at murder, and he rode the high horse, and talked about kicking me down stairs; but he wouldn't; no more would"—he was going to say, "you," but he said, "a great many other people."

"Now, instead of trying to bring Tom's nature to your own level, my dear Kriegsturm," replied the Princess, "you should try to raise your nature to his;" which was pretty as it stood, but which, on the face of it, did not seem to mean quite enough to arrest Kriegsturm's line of argument.

"Now," he therefore regardlessly went on, "we three being pretty comfortable together, and I having to find brains for the pair of you, it comes to this. The Squire is very fond of you, and very fond of the Colonel. You haven't hit it off together exactly, you remark. Why, no; but nothing is commoner than for people who are very fond of one another *not* to hit it off. You and the Colonel don't always hit it off, you know; why, if he were to offer to touch your jewels, the dead soldiers at Aspern down there would hear the row you two would make together. I and my poor wife didn't hit it off together. She put a knife into me once, but I didn't

think much about that. When I married a Sicilian I knew that I might have to attend vespers. But we were very fond of one another, and you and the Colonel are fond of one another, and you and the Squire are fond of one another, in spite of all said and done. And the Colonel must cheer the Squire's old English heart by killing a few Frenchmen; and you must use your influence with the Squire, and get the Colonel reinstated."

"That won't do," said the Princess, decisively.

"And why, your Highness?" asked Kriegsthurm.

"Because, the next time my brother sees me, he will probably assassinate me publicly, and, if not, hand me over to justice for robbing him. Now don't look *farouche* like that, and, if you choose to swear, swear in something less than a dozen languages at once."

"I was not swearing, your Highness; I was praying—praying for the safety of your Highness's intellect."

"Well, then, if praying produces that effect on your face, I should advise you to stop it until you have consulted a priest of your faith, whatever that may be."

"I will do so, Madame. Will Madame explain?" said Kriegsthurm, coming down sulkily to the inferior title.

"Certainly. You forged a letter to my brother in my handwriting about this poison business. We need not go into that; we have had more than enough of it; and the mischief arising from it is only beginning, as it seems to me. My brother kept that letter in a despatch-box in his bed-room. I, living with him so long, and knowing his habits, knew that he had *something* there, but did not know what. When, only the other day, you made the shameless confession of your unutterable villany to me, I acted on the spur of the moment. I stole his keys, I opened the black box, I stole all the papers in it, and immediately afterwards met him in the gallery."

"Did he suspect?"

"No; but he must have found out now. I took all kinds of papers, mortgages to the amount of many thousands of pounds, as it seems to me; and two of his wills."

"Your Highness has committed a serious felony," said Kriegsturm.

"So I supposed at the time," said the Princess. "But it is not of much consequence, I think. I talked about his assassinating me, or handing me over to



justice just now. I spoke too fast, as usual. He will never prosecute, you know. But our meeting again is an impossibility, that is all."

"I might prosecute," said Kriegsturm, "if your Highness returned to England."

"The idea of your prosecuting any one, my dear Kriegsturm! I don't know anything about law, but I know perfectly well that you are by far too disreputable a person to be believed on your oath. Off your oath you can be trusted, as I have often shown you; but once sworn I would not trust you, and you know that no English jury would."

"I have been faithful to Madame."

"Yes, but never on your oath. I have heard you swear certainly, in many languages, but you never took an oath to me. Pray, *par exemple*, to how many democratic societies have you sworn oaths, and how many of those oaths remain unbroken?"

"Your Highness is too strong for me. I wish to talk business. I cannot stand your Highness's logic."

"I am a foolish person," replied the Princess, "but like most foolish people, I am very cunning. You have ten times my brains, and ten times my *physique*; yet

you tremble at every shiver of the breeze in the poplars above you. You would answer that I am a conspirator also; yet who is the bravest of us now? I am not so much afraid of a violent death as you are. Women are braver than men. Come, to business."

"I think I am as brave as most men, Madame," said Kriegsthurm, "and I was not, until this moment, aware that your Highness was in expectation of a sudden and violent death, as I have been for now twenty years. If your Highness doubts my nerve, would you be so condescending as to allow me to prove it?"

"Certainly," said the Princess.

Kriegsthurm was standing with his head bent down into his bosom, as if shamefaced at losing the scolding-match with her. He now said, without altering his attitude, "Your Highness speaks Italian as well as English. Will you allow me to converse with you in Italian?"

Again she said, "Certainly."

Kriegsthurm, with his chin on his chest, went on in that language. "The Signora has challenged my nerves. I now challenge hers. The dearest friend of the man whom her late husband wronged so shamefully is stand-

ing close behind her ; if you turn you are lost. I am going to seize him, and I shall have to spring past you. He does not understand Italian. I demand therefore of the Signora that she shall remain perfectly tranquil in the little imbroglio which approaches. All I ask of your Highness is, that you will walk away from the combatants."

The Princess with her English nerves, stood as still as a lighthouse ; Kriegsturm, with his great powerful head bent down into the hollow of his enormous chest, as if to make his *congé*. But in one moment he had dashed past her, and had seized in his enormous muscular, coarse-bred, inexpressive fingers, the cravat and collar of our old friend Boginsky.

## CHAPTER IV.

### "JAMES'S" PROSPECTS ARE DISCUSSED.

KRIEGSTHURM was some fifteen stone, and Boginsky some eleven. The natural consequence of which was, that Boginsky came hurling on his back on the gravel, with old Kriegsthurm a-top of him. The Princess heard the hurly-burly, but like a true woman, waited to see what would be made out of it. She did not hear the conversation which followed between the two men, when they had got on their legs again, which was carried on in German.

"Why, what *art* thou doing here, and now, of all places and times?" demanded Kriegsthurm, as soon as he had picked himself up from the top of the laughing Boginsky, and was standing face to face with him.

"I was listening to what you and the Princess were

saying," replied Boginsky, merrily. "The devil, but you are strong. You will face a man boldly enough when he faces you; but you were frightened when I came *behind* you just now."

"I am afraid of your democratic committees," said Kriegsthurm.

"You have reason to be so," said Boginsky.

"Meet me again in half an hour," said Kriegsthurm, naming the place. And so they hurriedly parted.

"No danger after all, your Highness. Only an old brother conspirator, who may be useful to us. Now let us resume our conversation. What were the contents of these wills which you took?"

"I cannot say. Do you think that I would demean myself so far as to abuse my brother's confidence? I burnt them and a nice smell they made. My maid thought that I had scorched my boots against the stove, and I showed her a burnt glove to account for it."

At this characteristic piece of hopeless wandering folly on her part, Kriegsthurm was very nearly throwing up the whole business in despair. Not in disgust, for he in his way loved the woman. He went on, without any sign of contempt.

"That is rather a pity. One would have liked to know. I suppose he kept two wills by him to see how different people behaved themselves, so that he might destroy either. The one, if Madame will follow me, was probably made in favour of your favourite Thomas, the heir of his choice." And he paused to let her speak.

"And the other in favour of Arthur," she said.

"Excuse me. Silcote proposed to make him his heir, but Arthur refused, and they had words over it. No. The second will was probably in favour of James Sugden, a young man towards whom the Squire has shown the most singular favour: a favour so singular for him that there is little doubt that he is—forgive me—the darling son of your brother's old age."

"*That* cub!" exclaimed the Princess.

"I am glad that you consider him a cub," said Kriegsturm. "I have never seen him, and have doubtless been misinformed about him. He has been represented to me as a youth of singular personal beauty, of amazingly artistic talent, and irresistibly engaging manners."

"He kept all these qualities carefully to himself

whenever I saw him," said the Princess. "Yet still he was handsome, now I think of it, and drew beautifully, and everybody was very fond of him."

"Exactly," said Kriegsthurm, admiring the admirable way in which she contradicted herself, talking "smartly" one moment, and then letting her honesty, or simplicity, or whatever it was, get the better of her. "And this beautiful youth, born close to the lodge-gates, is desperately in love with your niece Anne, the Squire's favourite grandchild. It seems evident that one of the Squire's two plans is to foster a marriage between these two, and leave them the estate."

"If your theory of his birth be true," said the Princess, laughing, "it seems hardly probable that my brother, with his extremely rigid notions, should encourage a match between Anne and her uncle!"

Kriegsthurm had never thought of that. He had merely an idea that they were in some sort her cousins. I suppose that all conspiracies go blundering and tumbling about in this way before the time of projection. Judging from their almost universal failure, one would certainly say so.

"Besides, I remember all about this boy. He was

not born near the park-gates at all. His father and mother were two Devonshire peasants, who migrated up into our part of the world when the child was quite big. And moreover my brother's morality is utterly beyond suspicion,—has not his inexorable Puritanism been the cause of half this misery?—but to whom do I talk? I remember all about the boy and his belongings now. His mother was a woman of singular and remarkable beauty: with a rude ladylike nobility in her manner, which I never saw anywhere else. That very impertinent old woman Miss Raylock (who by the bye was creeping and bothering about at the ball to-night,) pointed her out to me first, one time when I was talking about the superiority of the Italian peasant over the English. And I remember all about the boy too. Tom and the people went out after some poachers from Newby, and this boy showed the most splendid courage, and got fearfully beaten and bruised, almost killed. And Tom,—was it not like my dear Tom?—carried the boy to Silcotes in his arms, as tenderly as if he was his own son. He little knew that the ungrateful boy would ever come to stand between him and his inheritance.”

As little, kind Princess, as he knew that the poor



wounded boy he carried in his arms so tenderly was his own son. Once in his wild loose wicked life, God gave him the chance of doing his duty by his own child he had so cruelly neglected and ignored: ignored so utterly that he would not inform himself about its existence. Through his own unutterable selfishness, once, and once only, had he the chance of doing his duty by his own son: on that occasion he did it tenderly and well. Let us remember this in his favour, since we have but little else to remember. The man was not all bad."

"Your Highness's reminiscences are interesting," said Kriegsturm. "This youth, this James Sugden, stands between the Colonel and his inheritance, and must be removed.

"What do you propose to do, then?"

"Wait, your Highness. I give up my theory of his birth, of course. I see that it is indefensible: so the original difficulty remains, don't you see? What is more likely than that Silcote should have planned a match between these two?"

"Nothing, I suppose."

"Of course, nothing. We all know that they are his

two favourites, and moreover they have fallen in love with one another."

"Excuse me once more," said the Princess. "This boy is not in love with Anne. He has the most extreme personal objection to her, to all her ways, and all her works. It is that mealy-faced, wretched little Reginald who is her adorer. This James worships Dora, Algernon's daughter."

"As if it mattered with a boy of nineteen. If his patron gave the word he would fall in love with this beautiful little niece of your's to-morrow."

"I don't know that," said the Princess. "He is terribly resolute, quiet as he looks. And she is a vixen."

"Your Highness is so absorbed in sentimental trivialities between boys and girls, that we shall never get on."

"They count, you know. And Dora, the Squire's other favourite, is desperately fond of *him*."

"I beg pardon."

"I said that she was deeply, jealously in love with this cub."

"That might be made to work," said Kriegsthurm.  
"Do you see how?"

"No," said the Princess,

"No more do I just at present," said Kriegsthurm, thoughtfully. "Have you any remark to make, Madame?"

"I have to remark that you and I have got into a very idiotic muddle at present. I generally remark that an idiotic muddle is the upshot of all conspiracies. I have not been engaged in so many as you have, but I have been engaged in enough, and to spare: I can speak of the effect of them on my own mind, and that effect has been muddle, unutterable muddle: a muddle which I fear has got chronic with me. For instance, I don't at this moment know whether you want James Sugden to marry Anne, or Anne to marry Reginald, or what you want. If I could marry my brother Harry it would set everything right at once, because I could leave the property to Tom after his death; but then I can't marry Harry, and besides, after this despatch-box business he will never speak to me again. There is only one thing more that I have to say, which is this: that I most

positively refuse to marry anybody whatever, even if it were to save the Silcote property from the hammer. I had quite enough of *that* with my sainted Massimo."

"But, your Highness——"

"He and his Signora Frangipanni indeed. Yes. Oh, quite so. The little doll. Frangipanni was a *gentleman*: and he believes to this day that I instigated Massimo both to the political villany and to the other worse villany. It is you, Kriegsthurm, who have torn my character to tatters, and compromised my name with your plots, until I am left all alone, a miserable and silly old woman!"

"Is she *off*?" thought Kriegsthurm, for she had raised her tone so high in uttering the last paragraph that the nearest sentry challenged. She was not "off." She began crying, and modulated her tone.

"Madame is safer here than elsewhere," said Kriegsthurm again. "She will remember the fearfully traitorous conduct of her late husband to the Italian cause in 1849. She will remember that she has rendered it impossible for her to go to England in the face of her brother's vengeance, and impossible

to go to Italy in the face of the vengeance of the Italian party and Signor Frangipanni. She will then remain here?"

"I think you had better leave me," she said.

I am getting nervous. There, go. I will have no harm done to the boy, but do the best you can for Tom. Are you angry with me? You know that I have always loved you, and been a faithful friend to you. Don't be angry with me."

Kriegsturm was a great scoundrel, but then he was a most good-natured man. Many who knew a very great deal about him said he was a good-hearted man. Probably his heart had very little to do with his actions. Most likely, lying inside that enormous chest, it was a very *healthy* heart, with the blood clicking steadily through it as true as a time-piece. In spite of his villanies and plots and scoundrelisms, he had some suspicion of what is called a "good heart." If one had said that some part of the man's brain was benevolent, and was expressed on his ferociously jolly great face, one might be nearer the truth. Anyhow, there was benevolence and gratitude in the man somewhere, for he knelt

down before the foolish old Princess, took her hand in his, kissed it, bowed to her, and sped away towards his interview with Boginsky, leaving her drying her tears and looking towards the French and Austrian graves over at Aspern.

## CHAPTER V.

### NOT TOO MUCH TO HIS ADVANTAGE.

"THAT is a very noble woman," said Kriegsturm, as he half walked, half trotted along. "She is worth the whole lot of 'em put together. She is a fool, like the rest of her family, but she is to my mind the best of them. She complains that she has got puzzled about the family plot: supposing I were to complicate it further by marrying *her*? No, that wouldn't do. In the first place she wouldn't have me, and in the second place we should all be in Bedlam as soon as the old man died, trying to find out our different relationships. She has managed to turn my brains upside down; they must be getting older than they were, or she would never have addled them like this. If I can get a thousand a year from Colonel Silcote, this is my last plot; for my wits are failing

me. I have debauched my logical powers and my power of examining evidence by going in for that wretched spiritualist business, the only piece of real charlatanism I ever did in my life. It has not paid, and I may say myself, as a very long-headed rascal, that charlatanism never does pay in the long run. The money comes too easy and too quick to stay by you. You put other folks off their heads, but then you put yourself off too. You cannot succeed unless you put yourself off your head and make yourself believe in it. And so you get to think that the fools are not fools, and, even if they are, that the crop will last for ever. And so you debauch your soul about your money matters, and spend when you ought to be saving.

"It is the same with conspiracies," he was going on, when he came sharp round the corner on to the place of meeting with Boginsky, and there was Boginsky waiting for him: who, when he saw him, burst out laughing.

"What in the name of goodness," said Kriegsthum, laughing in his turn, "brings you into this wasp's nest?"



"Revolutionary business, my dear," said Boginsky. "We, in London, thought that, as all the troops were being poured south, there might be a chance for us. We thought that a democratic rising in Vienna, in the rear of the army, just when they were hammer-and-tongs at it with the French, would produce a most unforeseen complication; and we live by complication and confusion, as you know."

"Now for a thorough-going fool give me a thorough-going democrat," said Kriegsthurm, impatiently. "Do you think that if you had any chance, *I* should not have known of it? Do you see on which side *I* am? Austria will be beaten certainly, but in spite of that, I have declared against the circles."

"I gave up all hopes the moment I saw it," said Boginsky.

"And how is your precious scheme working?"

"Well, you know better than I can tell you," said Boginsky. "It will not work at all. The committees won't look at us. They say that the demolition of the fortifications has changed the chances utterly. I came here expecting to head a revolt, and all the employment I can find is a very dirty job."

"And what may that be?" said Kriegsthurm.

"To watch you, and, if I catch you alone and unarmed—as you are now; in a private place—like this; in the dead of night with no witnesses—as now; to assassinate you. Which I am of course going to do this very instant, with this very American revolver. Therefore go down on your knees, and say your prayers at once."

Kriegsthurm laughed pleasantly. "You have got among bad company, then."

"I have. The old breed of democrats is dying out, and are replaced by men who disgrace the name, like these fellows. These fellows are Orsinists to a man. And what is worse, they have forgotten, or learnt to vilipend, the great names of the movement, Garibaldi, Kossuth, Mazzini, Manin, ay, and Boginsky, are sneered at by them as half-hearted men. These men, who sit, and plot, and drink, laugh at us who rose for the cause, and were taken red-handed. They proposed this business to me as a proof of my sincerity. I need not say that I accepted their offer with avidity, lest some more unscrupulous democrat among them might take it in hand. You are in great danger here."

"I thank you, Boginsky. You are a gentleman. You yourself are in very great danger here. I think, from an answer he gave me to-night, that Tom Silcote has seen you, and if he saw you again might denounce you to-morrow. I must get you out of this place."

"You must indeed, and yourself also."

"We will let that be; for the present, you are the first person to be considered. Are you poor?"

"I have absolutely nothing. I have nothing to eat. I have no clothes but what I stand in. Was there ever a democrat of my sort who was rich? And I have no passport. As for passing the lines into Italy, that is entirely impossible. I could get northward, but I have no money."

"You shall have money and passport if you will do something for me."

"Your money is Austrian, and I will not touch it."

"You can pay it back."

"Well, Jesuit! What is it then?"

"There is a young English artist, one Sugden, now at Saltzburgh."

"Well! Do you wish me to murder him for you?"

"I wish to heaven you would. It is so terribly unlucky you're being a gentleman and a man of honour."

"Not unlucky for *you*, is it?" said Boginsky.

"I am not sure of that," said Kriegsthurm. "I am getting so sick of the whole business, and more particularly of the Silcote complication, that I almost wish you had followed the instructions of the democratic committee, and put a bullet into me. I don't ask you to murder him. Will you meet him, and involve him in some of your confounded democratic conspiracies?"

"Teach him the beauty of democracy?" said Boginsky.

"Exactly," said Kriegsthurm. "Let him be seen in your sweet company before you make your own escape. Introduce him to the lower democratic circles, such as those of Vienna, who employed you to assassinate me. Excite his brain about the matter (he is as big a fool as you, I am given to understand). Show him the whole beauty of extreme democracy on Austrian soil; do you understand?"

"I see," said Boginsky. "Compromise him thoroughly?"

"*Ex*-actly, once more," said Kriegsthurm. "He can't come to any harm, you know. He is an English subject. They would send the British fleet into the Plaatzen See sooner than allow one of his pretty curls to be disarranged. Will you teach this noble young heart the beauties of Continental democracy?"

"Certainly," said Boginsky. "Where shall I meet you to get the money and the passport?"

Kriegsthurm made the appointment, and the night swallowed up Boginsky.

Kriegsthurm's brains had been so very much upset by his interview with the Princess, that he felt little inclined to go home to bed without having arrived at some conclusion or another. "These Silcotes," he said to himself, "would addle the brains of a Cavour, And I am not the man I was. That Boginsky will do nothing, you know. I must have this cub of a boy out of the way somehow; hang him! I wish he was dead. If the young brute were only dead, one could see one's way," he added aloud.

A sentinel, to whom he was quite close in his reverie, challenged.

"Silcote," cried Kriegsthurm savagely.

"What says he?" said the sentinel. "Stand?"

"Novara! Novara! dummer kopf," replied Kriegsthurm, testily. "Is he deaf?"

"Buffalora," said the sentry, sulkily, bringing his musket sharply to his shoulder, and covering something behind Kriegsthurm, and dangerously in line with him. "You behind there, who are following the Herr, and have heard the passwords, come forward, or I will fire."

"May the, &c. confound this most immoral city," said Kriegsthurm. "If I was only once well out of it! Now, who in the name of confusion will this turn out to be? Knock him over, sentry, if he don't advance. I am Kriegsthurm of the police."

"He is coming," said the sentry, with his finger still on the trigger, covering the advancing man. "Ah! here he is. You are now responsible for him, sir."

There crept into the light of the lamp which hung above the sentry's box a very handsome beardless

youth, of possibly twenty. The face of him was *oval*, the chin end of the oval being very long and narrow, the mouth well-shaped but large, and wreathed up at the corners into a continual smile, the splendid eyes not showing so much as they might have done from under the lowered eyebrows, nose long, complexion brown, hair black and curling, gait graceful but obsequious. A young gentleman from the Papal States, of the radical persuasion, rather shabbily dressed.

Kriegsturm was round and loud with him in Italian, and ended by arresting him formally before the sentry, and marching him off into the darkness.

## CHAPTER VI.

—WHILE HE HIMSELF DRAWS TOWARDS THE GREAT  
RENDEZVOUS.

THE new world, the world of nature, in her larger, coarser, Continental form, first broke on our old friend James's mind at the Drachenfels, that first outwork of the great European mountains. The great steel-grey river, sweeping round the crags and the vineyards, and winding away into the folded hills, gave him noble promise of the more glorious land which lay behind. It is as common as Brighton now, but remember what it was to you when you were as young and as fresh as James.

It satisfied his genial, "jolly," young soul. "Let us," he said to the quiet, apathetic Reginald, "make a lingering meal of all this. Let us dawdle up this beautiful river to the Alps, and study every inch



of it, until we have traced it to its cradle. Then we will descend on Italy, and take it."

Reginald cared little, so long as he was in James's company; and so they dawdled up the river bank, from right to left, sketching, painting, bathing, learning their German, and singing. They got enamoured of the German student life, and essayed to imitate it, with more or less success. They were both, like all S. Mary's boys, pretty well trained as singers, and James had a singularly fine voice. From their quaint training they had both got to be as free from any kind of conventionality as any German could possibly wish; and in a very short time they grew quite as demonstrative of their emotions as any German of them all. They were a great success among those Rhine people. The handsome, genial, vivacious James, with his really admirable, though uneducated, painting, his capital and correct drawing, his splendid singing, his unfailing good humour, his intense kindness of disposition, was of course a success; in spite of his, as yet, bad German. He was, and is, a really fine fellow, who would succeed anywhere, from California to Constantinople. But the quieter Reginald

was a greater. He painted infinitely worse, he sang worse, he talked less, than James; but the Rhine people believed in him more. When James had dazzled, and possibly puzzled them, they would turn to the silent Reginald, after all, and wish to know *his* opinion, believing, from his comparative silence, that he was the wiser; and Reginald, who had been hoping that James had exhausted the subject, knowing nothing of the matter in hand, would do his best, and be oracular and vague, which pleased them immensely.

So these two happy boys went up and down and to and fro in this early spring, as free as birds, as happy as birds. The snow was not off the *Höhe-Acht* when they first heard of the Eifel country. They must go, of course, at once, and went from Coblentz; though the ice was still floating down the Moselle, and navigation was impossible. They walked up that wonderful river side to Treves, in slush and mud; enjoying themselves immensely, and making themselves remembered to this day by some of the people in whose houses they stayed.

Reginald mildly asked James on their journey

whether he called this going to Italy to study art. But James said in reply, "Let me see the Porta Nigra, and I will fly south as true as a swallow." And Reginald laughed, and trod on with him through the mud, until they had seen the Porta Nigra.

Then they headed back to the dear old Rhine, through the volcanic country, looking by their way on lakes hundreds of fathoms deep, blue from their depth as the great ocean, yet lying in great hollows among smooth short-grassed downs, where the sheep were feeding and the lambs were crying. And they saw an eagle, and a wolf, and a wild boar just killed; and, having looked in on the Apollinaris Kirche, they quietly descended on Andernach.

Here they met a very old friend of a fortnight's standing. They had made a halt at Bonn of a few days, and had struck up a friendship, which was to be more than life-long, with several students there. The students among whom they had accidentally fallen were of course democratic. The "Cross" party at Bonn is as exclusive as Christ-Church. Happy-go-lucky James and Reginald, after a fortnight's examination of the question, were quite prepared to be convinced

that hereditary governors were a mere temporary stop-gap between the feudalism of the past and the democracy of the future. They did little more than bargain for Queen Victoria: at whose name the students took off their caps. As for the Prince of Wales, they gave him up. Among these terrible young gentlemen (who turn out the gentlest of beings as soon as they have a place and get married) they had come to the conclusion that Queen Victoria was the last crowned head which would be allowed to exist on the continent of Europe, and that she was only permitted to exist in consequence of her virtues as mother, wife, and woman.

Then there was the business of the map of Europe again. These students had settled that, among other things, England was to have Egypt, but not to be allowed any further territory in Europe, being too overwhelmingly powerful; Alsace to a united Germany; and all that sort of thing; but always England to be served first, and bought, and kept from interfering. Or again she *was* to interfere and arouse democracy, nationality, and what not: for they believed in her power then.

Our two boys also believed in all this. And one of the loudest democratic talkers of Bonn, under a cloud about a duel, met them at Andernach.

This youth was more of a geographical than a political radical. The form of government you might choose to adopt was a mere insignificant matter of detail to his enlarged and statesmanlike mind. So long as you restored absorbed nationalities, he was ready to congratulate Ireland or Poland in reverting to their original form of government. This young man walked up and down the street with our two friends for an hour or so, talking the most frantic nonsense about the Italian business: not unwatched.

At length they all agreed that refreshment was necessary, and the German boy, cocking his cap over his eye, and breaking out with—

“ Mihi sit propositum  
In taberna mori;  
Vinum est oppositum,  
Morientis ori.”

led them to a little *gasthaus*, taking care to inform them that the landlord's principles were sound; from which James and Reginald concluded that he was a man not only violently disaffected towards the powers

that were, but permanently disaffected towards any possible powers which ever might be hereafter. James's jolly humour made him half laugh at this kind of thing, but there was an air of mystery and adventure about it which made it very pleasant. He began to think that it would be very fine to have the prestige of belonging to one of these secret societies, more especially in such a very tight-laced state as Prussia. He followed his German friend, hoping to see some real Vehmgericht business at all events for once in his life.

The student made a sign to the host on entering, and immediately the host pretended, in the most patent manner, that he had never seen the student before, which interested and amused James, as it also did a Prussian police-official who was sitting at a table drinking. Then they passed mysteriously into an inner apartment, and shut the door after them; and the Prussian official and the host winked at one another, and laughed.

"You are not going to trouble those English boys?" said the landlord.

"Not I," said the policeman, "but I want *him*."

“For what?”

“Duelling. He went near to slit Von Azeldorf’s nose.”

“Pity he did not. The ass will make out a political offence, and become a martyr.”

“Of course the ass will. But he must slit the nose of one of his own order in future.”

“True,” said the host, thoughtfully.

The student led our friends into an inner parlour, and brought them up to a large lithographic print, before which he took off his cap, put his hands across his breast, and bowed. The print was well conceived and executed, and represented this:—Hungaria lay dead in her coffin. Kossuth, with a fold of his cloak masking his mouth, was taking a last farewell look at her face, before the coffin should be closed. At the head of the corpse stood the pale ghost of Liberty, staring with a calm frozen face at Georgey, who was in the right-hand corner, with a face distorted by terror and remorse, calling on the rocks to cover him, and the hills to hide him. (In reality, Georgey was comfortably at his own chateau, hard at work, with nets, pins, and corks, completing his almost unrivalled collection of

butterflies and moths, and perfectly easy in his mind. But we must have political caricatures.) The print was well drawn, and well executed, and our two boys were struck by it extremely, though the sad fact must remain that they had neither of them heard of Georgey in their lives.

“There he stands,” said their student friend. “False and perjured traitor, with the blood of the slain Hungaria choking the lies which would rise to his mouth. Georgey—Georgey,” he was going on, when a very quiet weak voice behind him said, in German,—

“It was a strong measure, certainly, that of Georgey’s. I confess I should not have been prepared to act so myself; but in the end Hungary will be the better, and Austria no worse.”

They turned, and saw before them one of the strangest-looking men ever seen by any of the three—a man with a face as beardless as a boy’s, as old-looking as a grandfather’s; a face of great beauty and power, with large, clear, luminous eyes, and a complexion like pale wax, without a wrinkle. The figure was not large, but well proportioned and graceful; the carriage was erect and bold, yet very calm and quiet, showing phy-



sical weakness, as of a man recovering from a great illness. Having said his say, he leant against the closed door, and surveyed them quietly and silently.

The German student took off his cap; Reginald stared as though he had seen a ghost; James was the first to recover his presence of mind. He cried out,

“My dear sir——”

“You will write out,” said Arthur Silcote, smiling, “the first book of Euclid before to-morrow morning, and bring it to my desk at the opening of school. ‘De tabernis non frequentandis,’ you know. You have violated one of our statutes, my boy. What is going to happen to this young gentleman?”

The young German student was being arrested. The policeman from the next room had come in, and had “taken” him.

“What has he done, then?” said Arthur Silcote.

“He has been duelling,” said the police.

“And has not ‘Von’ before his name,” said Arthur, after the young gentleman was removed. “Well, my boys, you seem to be getting into good company.”

“We are seeing the world, sir,” said James, laughing.

"One side of it, boy; one side of it."

"A very amusing side, sir, surely."

"Surely!" said Arthur. "When you hear a man use the word 'surely,' you always know that he is not 'sure' at all. That miserable tentative word 'surely' exasperates me. Don't use it again."

"I will not, sir. You are not angry with me?"

"Why, no," said Arthur, smiling. "I seldom ask great favours from people with whom I am angry, and I am going to ask a great favour of you."

James waited and wondered.

"I have been very ill. I have been deceived by the doctors as to the cause of my illness. They told me that my heart was hopelessly deranged, and that my life was not worth a fortnight's purchase. This has turned out to be all a falsehood. I am as good a man as ever, with a new lease of life before me. I have merely overworked myself, and I want rest. But this foolish falsehood of the doctors has produced its effect. I came abroad, leaving all my old friends, to die alone like a hunted deer. Mayo, at Boppard, tells me that I am to live, and stakes his reputation upon it. He has turned me out from his establishment to wander and

amuse myself. Will you let me wander with you? This new life, the assurance of which I get from Mayo, has become unexpectedly dear to me. I did not fear death; I only *hated* it. Death always seemed to me, if I dare say so, a mistake. I never doubted for one moment the continuity of my existence; I never had any physical fear of the great break in it: I only *hated* that break. I believe that I hate that great, and, as it seemed to me sometimes, *unnecessary* break in my existence as much as ever: but Mayo, the great expert, has removed it at least twenty years. I have a new life before me. Can you understand all this?"

"Well! well! sir," said James.

"I was fresher and freer once," said Arthur, "than you are now. In the old times, when Tom and I used to go and see Algy at Oxford, I was as fresh and as free as any one. And Algy is dead, and Tom is worse than dead: and I *have* been dead, boy."

"Dead, sir!" said James, wondering.

"Ay, dead: to hope and to ambition, and to much else. I have been dead, my boy, in a way, but I have come to life again. Come, let us walk together, and spend the day. At the end of it, you shall tell me if

I seem likely to suit you as a travelling companion or not."

"I can tell you that at once, sir. We shall be honoured and favoured by your company. I rather think that we are a little too young to do *entirely* without advice: have we not just seen our chosen companion walked off to gaol under our eyes? I am very indiscreet—no doubt—for my age; and as for Reginald, he is the soul of discretion and reticence. But we have made rather a mess of it hitherto, and there are heaps of things I want to know and cannot find out. And you are all alone, and want taking care of. We will take care of you if you will take care of us."

"These are all kind commonplaces," said Arthur. "But give me a trial. I am all alone in the world; I have been very ill, and I am slowly recovering. I shall be a drag on you, but I ask you in charity's sake for your company."

James tried to answer, but could not. To see a man whom he had always regarded as a prig and a bully brought so low as this affected him strongly. Reginald had dropped away from them, and they

were sauntering up beside the Rhine stream together and alone.


"Why are you silent?" asked Arthur.

"Because," said James, "I wish I had known you better before."

"That would have been but of little use," said Arthur. "As a fact, nobody did, except perhaps Algernon, who is dead and gone. I was a failure. Try to know me now, and it is quite possible that you will like me."

What simple James answered is not of much consequence. Arthur talked on to him, as the Ancient Mariner talked to the first person he could get hold of.

"The *hatred* of death—not the *fear*, mind—which has been hanging over me so long ruined and spoilt me. The doctors in their ignorance, gave me warning that I could not live, a long while ago. They told me that I had organic disease of the heart, and went far to ruin my life. It appears that such is not the case. I am a new man again. What the expectation of death could not do, the removal of that expectation has done. Bear with me a little, and see."



James only half understood him; but he answered:—

“One thing is plain, sir; you want attending to and looking after; and I will do that for you. Our meeting with you is a great stroke of good luck.”

“But you will want to ramble and range about, and I cannot do that.”

“We can ramble,” said James, “all day while you sit at home, and at night we can come back and tell you all about the day’s work or the day’s play. It shall go hard, between my sketches and my talk, if you do not enjoy the day as much as we do.”

So he joined them, and they rambled away together southward through Bavaria towards Saltzburg.

James was at first extremely afraid of the terrible inexorably-tongued Arthur. Then he was surprised and frightened at the great change in him; and at last got perfectly confidential with him, and actually went so far as to tell him one night that he had been utterly deceived in his estimate of his character. I doubt that James had been drinking the wine of the country.

“You mean,” said Arthur, “that I am not the priggish bully you took me for?”

"The words are yours, sir. You were never either prig or bully. But you were so hard and inexorable. Now you are so gentle and complacent in everything. A child could not be more biddable than you are."

"Yes; but in old times I was a schoolmaster," said Arthur, "now I *am* a child. Did I not tell you that I was new-born? I have a new lease of life given me on the highest authority. Life with me is not so enjoyable as it is with you. I am twenty years older than you: I cannot come and go, and enjoy every flower and shadow as you can. Yet life is a glorious good, and death is a terrible evil: ah! you may make what you like of it, but it is the greatest of misfortunes, that break in the continuity. But what do you know of death? Death has been with me night and day for many years. He is gone now, and I am as much a boy as you are, save that I cannot enjoy the world as you can. Do you understand me?"

"I think I do, sir," said James, gravely.

"This perfect rest and absence of anxiety (for Algernon is in heaven), combined with your kindly

ministrations and attentions, are making a man of me again. Is it not so?"

"You gain in strength and colour everyday, sir," said James. "And yet ——"

"And yet, you would say, my old temper does not return. Am I not changed, then?"

"You are your real self now, sir. That seems to be the truth."

"Let us hope so," said Arthur. "I think so myself. But, with my returning health, the old Adam is somewhat moving. The lassitude of my illness is going away; and I begin to feel a want for motion, for action, for something to stir me. Take me south, James, and let us see this war. There is sport afield there."

"What war, sir?"

"Oh, you young dolt," said Arthur, laughing. "Give me the footstool, that I may throw it at your head. What war? Why the grand crash between France and Austria, the stake of which is an Italian kingdom. I see how to enjoy life: to cultivate a careful ignorance on political matters."

"But the *Kölnische Zeitung* says that they are not going to fight," remarked James.



"The *Fliegende Blätter* may probably say the same," said Arthur. "Boy! boy! there is going to be 'a great thing,' as the foxhunters say. Take me south to see it. You can sketch it, and sell your sketches. I want motion, life: let us go."

"We will go, sir, certainly if you really think they will fight, and if you are able for it."

"You shall carry me," said Arthur. "My brother is in the business, and on the winning side. Old Austria for ever, in spite of all her faults."

"Which of your brothers is in the business, sir?" asked James.

"Tom," said Arthur. "Heaven help the Frenchman who meets him."

"I remember him," said James, "a kind man with a gentle face. He carried me to Silcotes in his arms once, after I had been beaten by poachers. By the bye, *you* were there. Do you remember it?"

"I do, now you mention it," said Arthur. "And you are that poor little thing in the smock-frock that Tom brought in his arms. I never exactly realized it till now. How things come round through all kinds of confusion! My silly old aunt took

you to bed that night; and you made your first acquaintance with Dora, and Anne, and Reginald. Well, then, it is settled that we are to go south, and see this war."

"I glory in the idea, sir," said James. "I have never looked on war."

"Nor I," said Arthur. "It will be a cold bath for both of us. The accessories will not be pleasant; but it will do us both good. A review on a large scale, with the small and yet important fact of death superadded; and a kingdom of twenty millions for the stake. A University boat-race, in which the devil actually does take the hindmost. Let us go, by all means."

## CHAPTER VII.

### ARTHUR DEALS WITH KRIEGSTHURM'S ASSASSINS.

ARTHUR, with his two pleasant companions, James and Reginald, went pleasantly on southward past Coblentz, past Heidelberg, Stuttgard, to Munich, where perforce there was a little delay. Arthur was for pushing on as quickly as possible, and indeed grumbled good-humouredly at being taken so far eastward at all ; but the boys were too strong for him. They had made the acquaintance of Kaulbach at the Apollinaris Kirche, and also in the Cathedral windows at Cologne ; and they were determined to go to the home of the man whom, after Landseer and Tenniel, they placed as the greatest living master in Europe. They talked Kaulbach, and imitated him, Arthur, with a calm smile always in his face, laughing at them, and measuring their human figures with an inexorable

pair of compasses which he had, greatly to their discomfiture.

“If you can draw the human figure correctly and rapidly at thirty, boys,” he used to say, “you will be able to do as much as any Englishman, save six, can. Patience and work first; freedom afterwards. Nevertheless, go it! This man’s right leg is longer than his left, but it will shorten in time. There are men at the top of the tree who can’t for the life of them draw a man’s legs of the same length. So go it. Who knows what you may do by hard work? You may be able to draw as well as a fourth-class Frenchman some day. Go it!”

They were thoroughly happy these three on this journey, and they took notes of one another to their mutual surprise.

Arthur, of course, never dreamt that James was his own nephew: only four people knew that as yet. May I call the reader’s attention to this fact?—Silcote’s extremely slight attentions to James had all taken place before Silcote knew that James was his own grandson. Rumour, dealing with an unaccountable man like the Squire, had developed these few

growling attentions into a theory that Silcote would make him his heir. Lord Hainault, surely a safe man, entirely believed this preposterous fiction. To worship properly the goddess Fama you must live in the country. She gets pretty well worshipped in town, at clubs and in drawing-rooms; but her temples are in the counties.

"Reginald," mused Arthur, "is an ass. The only redeeming point in him is his respect and love for this peasant boy James. And the most unfortunate part of the business is, that now dear old Algy is dead it is more than probable that Reginald will be made heir. And he will marry that silly little Anne. Confound it! all the property shan't go like that. There has been sin enough and bother enough in getting it together and keeping it together. There is some sentimental feeling my father has toward Algernon's mother, which will come into play now the dear old boy is dead. And he will leave everything to Reginald on condition of his marrying Anne. I wish to heaven that this James Sugden was a Silcote and heir.

"But I will not stand this," he added aloud, rising

up and pacing the fifth room of their long suite of apartments at Munich. "No," he went on, throwing open the door and bursting into the fourth room—"I will be heir myself sooner. He offered the place to me once. I will hold him to his bargain."

Kriegsturm and the Princess never were further at sea than he was just now. His wits were somewhat got together by noticing that James was sitting upon the floor, and his painting tools were scattered far and wide.

"What is the matter, James?" he asked. "Why I was just thinking of you!"

"I should hardly have thought it, sir," said James, laughing. "You have knocked me and my apparatus over so cleverly that I should have thought that you were thinking of some one else."

"Did I knock you over?" asked Arthur, earnestly.

"Well, with the assistance of the door you did, sir."

"I am extremely sorry, my good fellow," said Arthur, anxiously. "I was in hopes that these fits of half-unconscious absence were entirely gone; but I am getting the better of them, decidedly. This must be

the very last of them. Let me help you to pick up your paints. You should not have sat so near the door, and I should not have opened it so quickly. We were both in the wrong."

"I sat there for the light, sir."

"Then you are in the right and I am in the wrong. I will make amends. I consent to go to Salzburg without further opposition: out of our way as it is."

"You are very kind, sir. I *did* want to see it so much."

James on his part noticed with wonder several things about Arthur. His irritability was gone; that was the first thing. Moreover, he never dictated, but consulted quietly with James, sometimes even with Reginald, and yielded easily. His old rapid vivacious activity had given place to a quiet contemplative habit of body and mind. He was, for the first time in his life, tolerant of inactivity, and seemed to like it. He was tolerant of trifles,—nay, began to be interested in them. James, for instance, got himself a wonderful waistcoat at Munich, which had to be altered, and Arthur took the deepest interest in the

alteration. He began to talk to casual people at the *cafés*, and found them out to be the most wonderful people ever seen or heard of. He told James that gardening was a neglected art, and that he certainly should take it in hand as soon as he got to England again; bought Reine Marguerite and stock seeds, and packed them off to Silcotes to the gardener, with many directions, regardless of expense. He was going to learn to paint (under James's directions), he was going to shoot, he was going to fish, all quietly and in good time, with the best advice (as he was before he went to Boppart, he would have consulted Blaine's "Encyclopædia" over night, and ridden a steeplechase next morning). At present his principal employment was learning of military tactics, because "James had promised to take him to the war."

A change indeed: but what wonder? He was a man of keen vivacious intellect, with as much wish to enjoy life as he had when he used to run with the boats at Oxford years ago, when he, and Algernon, and Tom were young and innocent. The doctors had condemned him to death; and he had got his reprieve. He was young, and he had begun once



more to love life and what life can give most dearly ; and that new-found love had softened and changed him.

Piloty and Kaulbach were to look to their laurels. The son of Mrs. Tom Silcote was not likely to be balked by want of audacity, or tiresome attention to such little matters as correct drawing. In three close days, James had produced a really fine historical picture (barring drawbacks, such for instance as that no dealer would have given five pounds for it, and that all the legs and arms were odd ones). There was no sky ; but the Roman amphitheatre, with tier after tier of almost innumerable spectators, was piled up to the top of the canvas. Close to you, divided from the arena by a deep space of boarding, lolled the Roman emperor ; fat, gross, and in purple, looking with a lazy drunken leer at what was passing in the scene below in the foreground. Behind him was dandy Petronius smoothing his beard, and looking at nothing ; and others, not to be mentioned here, but with whom every schoolboy who has handled Lemprière, the first book generally put into his hand, is perfectly familiar. In the extreme foreground of this picture of James's

were two boys, Christians, condemned to the lions, one about eighteen, the other about sixteen. The elder, with a short sword drawn back behind his hip, was looking at *you*, with parted lips, ready for battle, while his brother cowered behind him in utter ghastly terror. Between you and them, on the sand, was the shadow of a crouching lion. *You* were the lion: despair and terror were close to you in these handsome lads; above them were the unutterable luxury and vice described by Suetonius (if he lies not) in the person of the Emperor and Sporus; beyond, tier after tier, the wicked, cruel old world, which exists now only in Spain, and in the colonies of the Latin races which still exist in America.

"That is very fine," said Arthur. "I give you credit for great genius. Piloty would have drawn better, but he could not have conceived better. Will you give me this?"

"Of course I will, sir, heartily."

"Now for some flake white and megilp; Roberson's medium, hey? Well, I am agreeable." And so, with flake white and Roberson's medium, he daubed the whole thing out.

"It was hardly such a 'bung' as to deserve that, sir," said James, quietly.

"It was no 'bung,'" said Arthur; "only try another subject next time."

"I learnt that at school, sir."

"Then forget it. You would never have attempted this picture if you had not come to Munich. Let us go on to Salzburg at once, and get your foolish will accomplished there. After that, mind, we go inexorably south-westward."

"I will follow you, sir."

"Change the conversation. What do you like best?"

James, very much alarmed after the destruction of his picture lest the old Arthur should have returned, and the new Arthur have been only a deceiving fiend sent to lure him to his destruction, replied:—

"That is a very difficult question to answer, sir."

"But you can answer it, surely, my boy. I only asked for what you liked best; surely you can answer that."

"Well," said James, speaking to the new Arthur, "I consider Mayduke cherries as fine as anything.

Speaking about this part of the world, I should say that the vanille ices which Reg. and I had at Aix-la-Chapelle, washed down with Bairischer, were as good as anything."

"Heaven help his stomach. Ices and small beer! You'll be grey at forty!" exclaimed Arthur. "How ill were you at Aix-la-Chapelle?"

"Not very. I felt as if I had been drinking out of the bloodhounds' pan at Silcotes, and swallowed the brimstone; but that was the waters. Also I dreamt for the next fortnight that I had stolen a sitting of rotten eggs, and eaten them: that was also the waters. Reg. shut up, and had the doctor."

"After the ices and beer?"

"Exactly," said James.

"What I want to get at is this," said Arthur. "You enjoy life. What is it which makes life so enjoyable to you?"

"I have no idea," said James.

"You must have some sort of an idea. You are not a fool. Think."

"Well," said James, after a pause. "I should say 'hope.' Hope of generally bettering myself: of rising

higher some time or another. Succeeding in art, and rising to the position of having a house of my own—and—so on."

"I want to learn how to enjoy life," said Arthur. "It seems to me that no one could tell me better than yourself. As I understand you, your way of enjoying life is to wrap yourself up *in* yourself, and think only of your own personal advancement. I suppose you are right. Yet I am disappointed."

"You are quite wrong," said James: "I have no self. All that I think, attempt, or do, is done for another, and she is alone, nearly friendless, I doubt, and for aught I know penniless. I,——"

"There, no more of it," said Arthur. "I understand there is another, then. That is all I wanted to know; never mind sentimental details. You would not enjoy life if there was not a chance of some one else enjoying it with you. I have heard all I wanted. Now for Salzburg to-morrow, for I want to get down to the war, and we shall be late."

They had been three days at Salzburg, when Arthur, sitting quietly in his chair and reading, had, like a vast number of other men in a vast number of

other stories, his attention called to a knock at the door, whereupon he called out, "Come in."

There entered a pale, beardless man of about thirty-five, dressed in plain black. Arthur had time to notice that this man had very steady and beautiful eyes, before he rose from his seat and bowed deferentially to him.

The stranger bowed low also, and spoke in English, and not very good English either, using however the universal French title, as being the safest. "Monsieur, I think, labours under a mistake as to my social rank. I beg Monsieur to be seated, as I only come as a suitor, asking a favour."

"You have got a beautiful tender face of your own, Mr. Sir," thought Arthur, as he seated himself with a bow; "your wife did not want much wooing, I fancy."

And the stranger said, also to *himself*, "You are a fine-looking man, my pale, beardless priest. Twelve such as you among us would make twelve or thirteen crowns shake. Kriegsturm never reckoned on *you*."

Arthur began by saying pleasantly, "I am at your commands, sir."

"I understand, sir," said Boginsky, "that you wish to go south to the war. I come to offer my services as courier, factotum, valet, what you will."

"We never contemplated engaging the services of a gentleman in any of those capacities," replied Arthur. "We intend to go as mere happy-go-lucky Englishmen, see what we can, and imagine what we can't. I really think that we do not want you."

"I really think that you do," said Boginsky. "You are absolutely ignorant of military matters. I am a soldier, a general who has commanded a brigade; I will not at present say a division. I speak every language spoken in the Austrian army; you certainly do not. I am safe by an Austrian police passport on this side of the soon-to-be-changed boundary; as soon as we are in Italy I am at home, Pole as I am, with the meanest man in the army. I am extremely poor, which is in your favour (unless you commit the error of paying me too highly, and so making me independent of you). I am very amiable and good-natured, which is in your favour also; I am (personally, not politically) quite desperate, which is again in your favour; and, what is more

in your favour than all, I like your personal appearance, and you like mine."

"You tempt me," said Arthur, fairly laughing. "As a general rule, I find that this plain, outspoken boldness, with a specimen of which you have just favoured me, is the inseparable accident (to go no further) of a designing person, who possesses the moral qualities of boldness and physical courage. You accuse me of liking your personal appearance. I confess it. I want, however, further tempting. May I ask, for instance, how a high-bred gentleman like yourself finds himself in this position?"

"You have not dabbled, then, with political changes, tending to democracy?"

"Theoretically yes; practically, no," replied Arthur.

"I have knocked together as many constitutions as Sièyes, if that is any use to you."

"Yes; but it is not, you know," said Boginsky. "In England and America all that sort of thing may be done uncommonly cheap. Men in England, for instance, of the aristocratic class, who live by social distinctions, or at least get all their prestige from them, habitually take this tiger kitten of democracy



into their drawing-rooms, and call it pretty dear, and say, 'Was there ever such a pretty, harmless kitten in this world?' When the tiger-kitten grows to a real tiger, and shows its nails, if they stroke its velvet pads, these men say, 'Out on the nasty, ungrateful beast!' and thank God that they are Whigs. I speak, I tell you fairly, as a headlong democrat,—as a man who, whether right or wrong, believes that universal democracy is only a matter of time, and as a man who has sacrificed marriage, wealth, home, friends, position, for my idea, knowing well all the time that I should be dead and rotten in my grave years before my idea had become realized."

Arthur rose and stood before the man, and bowed his head in sheer respect to him. Here was a man with a faith; a faith which, unluckily, as he thought at first, brought a new Gospel with it; but afterwards he asked himself whether or no it was not the real old Gospel after all. How he settled this matter is no possible business of mine. I am not Arthur Silcote's keeper.

Boginsky went on. "I have said too much possibly, possibly too little. Let it go. You ask me how a

nobleman like myself found myself in this position, and I answer by challenging you to air the mildest and most innocent of your Sièyes constitutions on the continent of Europe. You said also that you wanted further tempting; I cannot tempt you further. You aroused the devil or the angel in me somehow, and I have no further courtesies to interchange with you. I make you once more the offer that I should go to the war with you in a menial capacity. I like you and your looks, but I am getting weary of life."

"Come with us, then," said Arthur; "come frankly and heartily. We are rich, ignorant, and perhaps Philistine; certainly indiscreet by taking you, of whom we know nothing, except that you are a dangerous conspirator. Join us, not as a servant, but as a companion. We of course pay all expenses; and as for any extra honorarium, you had better leave that to one of the Silcotes, possibly the most extravagant and open-handed family in England, according to their lights and their means. The bargain is struck?"

"Certainly."

"Then there is one other little detail to which to

call your attention. I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"Boginsky."

"*What* Boginsky?" said Arthur, in wonder.

"The younger Boginsky himself. No other."

Arthur, who had been standing up until now, sank back in his chair and took up his book. "Come and take off my boots, General," he said. "Let it be written on my tomb, that he had his boots taken off by the most brilliant guerilla democratic general in Europe. So this is what continental democracy brings a man to! My dear Count, have you dined?"<sup>1</sup>

"I really have not," said Boginsky. "But I have got so very much used to hunger, among other things, that I can well wait. After I have served your dinner for you, I shall be glad of the scraps."

<sup>1</sup> This is not impossible. If the reader had seen the younger Boginsky where I saw him, he would know it: one says nothing of Frangipanni, still less of Napoleon at Hâm. Yet things are distinctly better for unsuccessful continental politicians than they were. Mont St. Michel itself has become a sentimental show place, where idle contributors to this Magazine may get themselves shut up in dungeons, and, what is still better, get let out again by knocking at the door. In England, America, and, last and most glorious, in Italy (of all places in the world), unsuccessful continental politicians are *safe*.

"Don't speak to me like that again, Count," said Arthur, sharply. "I beg you to remember that there are such animals still left in the world as English gentlemen. You are our guest from this moment. If I have offended you by my coarse insular jest of asking you to take my boots off, I have only to say that it was through its utter incongruity, the highest compliment which my stupidity suggested to me. Take my book, sir, and make yourself comfortable. I will go after dinner, and try to find out when my two erratic boys are likely to be at home." And so he went.

Boginsky sat, and began looking at his book, but not reading it. "That man is a gentleman," he said after a time. "And he will make a gentleman of me again. God help me. I have risen very high. I have given up everything: name, fame, life, position, and the power of doing good, I fear, also. Yet I have fallen very low; I have taken Austrian money from Kriegsturm: and I have offered to be this man's valet. No man of the present generation will be alive to see democracy on its legs. Garibaldi goes for monarchy. It is very hard. The forty years in the desert shadowed it out to us. Frangipanni will

see his will worked out; he will see Italy united under a bull-faced Sardinian chamois-hunter. But as for the poor democrats—I wonder whether we shall be conscious of what goes on after death. I *should* like to see the old cause triumph. But then again I would sooner die the second death, and be annihilated utterly,—cease to be, if that were possible,—than see it beaten. I am mazed with it all. Suppose we got it and it failed!

“This gentle Englishman is gone after his boys. I will read my book then: Edmund About. You will not do much for us, or such as you. Our heads are weary, and some of us are getting fierce. ‘Sans compter le petit Mortara.’ That is very good, and makes one laugh, though one wishes one’s work was done and that one were dead. We shan’t get much out of you French, at least if your opposition is led by Thiers, whose own mild democracy means mere French aggrandizement.”

When Arthur came back he found him walking thoughtfully up and down the room. “I have something very particular and important to say to you, Mr. Silcote,” he said.

Arthur was all attention.

"I wish to tell you, sir, to what I owe the honour of your acquaintance. From one reason or another I found myself, but a few days ago, in extreme poverty and considerable danger at Vienna: I accepted a mission to this place which gave me safety and a little money. I was commissioned to seek your *protégé* Sugden here, and involve him with the police."

"And you *accepted* this mission?" said Arthur with emphasis.

"I do not look much like a deceiver of youth," said Boginsky, laughing. "I accepted the mission lest a worse man might be sent on it. But I would hardly have thought it necessary to speak to you on the subject had it not been that I have too much reason to fear that the plot against this innocent youth has developed into something much darker and fouler than merely involving him with the police; and that it is my duty to warn you against what may be a very serious disaster."

Arthur sat down and watched him intently.

"The man who sent me has evidently distrusted me, and sent another to watch me. Kriegsturm is

losing his head, or he would never have made the mistake of sending a lad whom I *know* to watch me. Had I ever intended to carry out his intentions, this act of his of setting a spy on me would have absolved me from my engagement with him. Will you come to the window with me?"

They went. Boginsky pointed to a figure lying lazily on a bench under some linden-trees,—the figure of a handsome olive-complexioned youth tolerably well dressed, lying in a beautiful careless artistic attitude, with his face turned towards their house.

"That young man," said Boginsky, "is a young Roman democrat, known to me, although my person is unknown to him. I have gathered from him that he is commissioned by Kriegsthurm to watch your young friend James Sugden, and to report on all our proceedings. He came to Vienna in the suite of Miss Heathton, the travelling governess of Miss Anne Silcote. He was abruptly discharged from their suite, because he was unable to keep to himself his frantic admiration for Miss Silcote. The man who commissioned him, Kriegsthurm, has inflamed his mind to madness by telling him that Miss Anne Silcote

is devotedly attached to this Paris apple of a boy James. The young dog is a worthless member of a good Roman family, among whose family traditions is assassination. Whether he carries knives or Orsini bombs I cannot say; but he has a nasty dangerous look about the eyes. I only know that if I saw him handling anything like a black cricket-ball, with ten or a dozen short spikes on it, I should shout 'Orsini!' run down the street, and never stop till I got round the next corner."

"Do you mean to say there is a probability of his murdering James?"

"No, not a probability, but an absolute certainty," said Boginsky. "I rather think that I am included in the black list myself"

"If it were not for your shrewd face and your calm quiet eyes, I should think that you were mad," said Arthur. "This is going to see the war with a vengeance. But I cannot make head or tale of the story yet. What possible cause of anger can this Kriegsthurm have against James?"

"Kriegsthurm *inter alia* is right-hand man to your aunt the Princess Castelnovo. He was her confidant



in some old political plots, and in other things of which I cannot speak to you, you being her nephew and a gentleman. She is devoted to your brother Thomas, and wishes to see him in possession of the family estates. Kriegsthurm's interest is, of course, the same as that of Colonel Silcote your brother, of whom again, *as* your brother, I wish to speak with the profoundest respect. I only speak of Kriegsthurm. Kriegsthurm is apt to be unscrupulous at times (he could have stopped Orsini, but did not), and this boy, James Sugden, stands alone between the inheritance of the estates and Colonel Silcote. Consequently Kriegsthurm wishes him out of the way. And so you have a noble young Roman lying on a bench in front of your door, with knives in his boots, and, for anything I know, explosive black cricket-balls covered with percussion spikes in his coat pockets. If he were to tumble off that bench now, and exploding his bombs to go off in a flame of fire, I might be pleased, but should not be in the least surprised. A British newspaper would describe it as a 'remarkable accident,' and a British jury would bring in verdict as 'Death by the

visitation of God.' But I have suffered by continental politics, and understand them. That young man is dangerous."

"You ought all to be in Bedlam together," bounced out Arthur. "James Sugden the next in succession! Why, he is a peasant boy born near the park-gates! My father, who hates boys beyond measure, has never interchanged fifty words with him altogether. *I* am my father's heir. *I*, who speak, come into entire possession of three-fourths of the whole property at my father's death. I objected to the arrangement, but he has persisted in it, and I have a letter upstairs from my father's lawyer assuring me of the fact; written, I believe, by my father's orders, in consequence of some old and worthless papers having been stolen from his bedroom by his servants. The boy Sugden has no more to do with my father's will than you have, and the rogue Kriegsthurm must be mad."

"There you spoke right, sir," said Boginsky; "there you spoke very well indeed. Our good old Kriegsthurm has lost his head, and with his head his morality political, and other. I have feared it for some time; and I dread that what you say is too

true. He has been going wrong for some time. His principles were really sound and democratic at one time, but he got debauched. He trimmed too much. I noticed, years ago, that he was in possession of the arguments of our opponents, and could state them logically,—a fatal thing in politics; then I noticed that he would talk, and even eat and drink, with aristocrats,—a still more fatal fact against him. It was followed, of course, by his taking to charlatan-ism, to table-rapping, and spirit-calling; and ended, of course, by his being involved with the great authors of all confusion, the Silcotes. Poor old Kriegsthurm! He has lost his head by plotting without principle. Dear old fellow! I must write to Frangipanni about him. Frangipanni has a great deal of influence with him. Poor old Kriegsthurm! I am so sorry for him."

"Yet he compassed your death," said Arthur, looking keenly into Boginsky's face, and thinking, "I wish I had *your* face."

Boginsky, looking at Arthur, and thinking, "I wish I was like you," replied, "This is a mere matter of detail. Kriegsthurm is a man who acts from settled

rules. I interfered with his plans, and he wished me removed. You would hardly object to him for that, would you?"

"But," said Arthur, aghast, "if I interfered with your plans for the regeneration of the human race, you would not murder me, would you?"

"I?" said Boginsky, "certainly not. I hold that it is utterly indefensible for one man to take another man's life. I hold that the taking of human life in any way, judicial or not judicial, is the greatest sin which a man can commit."

"Yet you defended Vienna, and fought with your own right hand, and slew. Did you not commit the great sin then?"

"True," said Boginsky, "I sinned in defending Vienna, forasmuch as I took human life. But the virtue of the defence counterbalanced the sin of the slaughter of my fellow-men. Are you so insularly stupid as not to see that? Besides, it often becomes necessary to commit a great crime to practise a noble piece of virtue: in which case the greater the crime the greater the virtue."

At this astounding piece of logic and ethics Arthur

gave a great gasp, and stood staring at him in dismay. He would fain have argued with him, but the heresy was too vast and too amorphous to begin on. There was, as he afterwards expressed it, no right end to it, no handle, and so it was impossible to say where to take hold of it.

"Well, there is no doubt about one thing, sir," he said. "We owe you a very great obligation, and will try to repay it. We will concert measures for our young friend's safety."

"We will discuss the matter, sir," said Boginsky. "Remember, only, please, that to compromise him here is to compromise me. Meanwhile we will talk over our route. I will undertake to keep my eye on the young Roman gentleman."

They talked for an hour, and decided to go towards Turin. The route was extremely difficult, which was a great recommendation.

At the end of the hour Boginsky took his departure to make arrangements. Arthur, looking out of the window, and seeing the noble Roman still on the bench, began dimly to realize that he was actually in foreign parts, and that this young man, with his

potential knives and Orsini bombs, was not only a reality, but an intolerable nuisance to be at once abated.

"I wish you were on a bench in Christchurch Meadow, my dear young friend," he thought, "and that I was proctor. I have sent as good men as you down for a year for half as much. Hang it," he continued aloud, "I'll try it; I'll proctorize him. I will, upon my word and honour. If he shies one of his petards at me, I am cricketer enough to catch it. I never was a butter-fingers, though a bad batter. If he tries his knives on me, I will punch his head. I'll proctorize him!"

Whether to go close to him to avoid his petards, or to keep away from him to avoid his knives, he could not in the least degree decide. He ended by pursuing the old English (and French) method of laying himself yardarm to the enemy, and boarding him suddenly. He went straight up to our apparently slumbering young friend, shook him by the shoulder, and said roughly and loudly in French, which will be better given in vernacular than with his pedantic ill-translated Oxfordisms—

"Get up, sir! How dare you lie here? What do you mean, you miserable young assassin, by watching a subject of Her Britannic Majesty in this scandalous manner? I am a *civis Romanus*, sir, with all the power of the British empire at my back."

The startled youth staggered to his feet, and put his right hand under his jacket.

"Don't attempt anything of the sort, sir," said Arthur, perfectly aware that he was in extreme danger of his life, but perfectly cool, and blundering between rusty French and proctorial recollections. "I shall permit nothing of the sort for a moment, sir. I shall write to your father, sir."

"Who are you, and what authority have you over me?" said the youth, with parted lips and dangerous eyes.

"That is no business of yours, sir," replied Arthur, running into English, which the youth, luckily, understood. "Authority, indeed! You will call" (he was just going to say, "You will call on me at eight o'clock to-morrow morning," but saved himself) "down the vengeance of Heaven on your head, sir, if you consistently and pertinaciously persist in going on in

your present course, sir; and from a careful study of your character, extending over the whole period of your career, I fear that such will be the case. Now you just take your hand from under your jacket, you murderous young cub, for I am a short-tempered man, and will give you the best thrashing you ever had in your life, if you don't."

The Roman did so, and smiling faintly said—

"Monsieur has some cause of complaint against me; Monsieur said he was a Roman just now."

"I *am* a Roman," replied Arthur, seeing he was wavering, in headlong heat, "in the Palmerstonian acceptance of the term, sir—an acceptance which I should be inclined to think would not easily be comprehended by a person of your extremely limited abilities, dissipated habits, and murderous intentions. You will go down for a year, sir, and I shall write to your father."

"My father is dead, sir," said the astonished and frightened Italian.

"That does not make the slightest difference, sir; it only aggravates the offence," went on Arthur, seeing that the habit of *scolding*, which he had learnt as



tutor, proctor, and schoolmaster, was for once doing him good service; and therefore scolding on with all the vagueness of a Swiveller, and the heartiness of a Doll Tearsheet—"I am happy to hear that he *is* dead. It was the best thing he could do under the circumstances. And I respect him for it. If he could see you in your present degraded position, it would bring down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave, which you will ultimately succeed in doing."

The last fearful bathos nearly made Arthur laugh, but made him get his wits about him again. The Italian said, utterly puzzled and abroad—

"What is it that Monsieur desires?"

"I have told you, sir;—that you go away from here; that you disappear from the presence of all honest men. Do you see that sentry there?" he added, pointing to the nearest. "Shall I call to him, and tell him the story of Kriegsthurm and Silcote?"

"*Mais! M'sieu,*" hissed the Roman, seizing his hand, and kissing it, "I am very young. I am too young to die!"

"Too old to live, boy. Repent, boy! I spare your

youth, and will not denounce you. Go back to the assassin Kriegsturm, and tell him that this night he is denounced to both the Austrian and Italian Governments; that all his miserable plots are discovered; and that you are the last of his emissaries that I will spare. He knows *me*. Tell him that Arthur Silcote said so."

The young Roman vanished from under the lime-trees, and was seen no more for the present, and Arthur stood scratching his head.

"I doubt," he soliloquised, "that I have been lying a little. I will put that consideration off to a more convenient opportunity. But Carlyle is right about his 'preternatural suspicion.' If that boy had not been bred in an atmosphere of suspicion, I never could have done anything with him by loud, self-asserting scolding. One of my St. Mary's boys would have laughed at me. *I* could not have done anything with that boy if his conscience had not been bad. Well, I have got rid of him, though I talked sad nonsense, as far as I can remember, and—Heaven help me!—I doubt, lied. Yet the proctorial art is a great one: given the position, and if judiciously exercised. Bank-

ruptcy commissioners, police-magistrates, and University officials are the only people who are left to keep alive the great art of scolding; schoolmasters have to be civil in these days of competition, lest their schools should get empty—as some parsons must preach pleasant things for the sake of their pew-rents.—Hallo! Boginsky! I have packed off our Roman assassin over the Marches.”

“How, then?”

“I proctorized him.”

“What does that mean?”

“Scolded him till he did not know whether he stood on his head or his heels. Put out all my strong points against him, while he was condemned to silence.”

“As the priest does in the sermon?” said Boginsky.

“*Exactly*,” said Arthur. “In the slang of my University, I call that proctorizing, and think it a very good thing too. You surely can stand to hear the law laid down *once* a week, however feebly. You have six days left for interpellations. But have you been much in Prussia?”

“Why?”

"An idle thought, not worth pursuing. An *English* University proctor can be very exasperating; I was considering what a *Prussian* proctor would be like. I doubt he would be a Tartar. Well, now for the war. By-the-bye, I shall have to fight a duel with you."

"On what grounds?"

"My brother fights with the Austrians."

"*N'importe*. They will be beaten," said Boginsky, "and we will be gentle with them."

"Democracy allied with the Second of December!" said Arthur; "you are a nice lot. I shall proctorize some of *you*."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE PLENIPOTENTIARY ARRIVES AT TURIN.

As they four drove into the courtyard of their inn at Turin, in their roomy hired carriage, they saw a reeking horse having his saddle taken off, and a tall black-whiskered gentleman in a large cap, who talked consequentially with the landlord.

"Hallo!" said Arthur. "Here is some one travelling in the old style. There will be a swell arrival directly. I hope they have not taken the whole house."

"By no means," the landlord assured them. "It was the English plenipotentiary, travelling towards Alessandria, with the ready-signed preliminaries of peace."

"Wonder he don't go by rail if he is in a hurry. They will all have cut one another's throats before he gets there," remarked Arthur.

They were shown into a nice *salon* adjoining the suite of apartments taken by the plenipotentiary, only separated from theirs by folding-doors, which the landlord pointed out were locked on *their* side.

"I doubt we shall hear every word they say," remarked Arthur. "If we do hear any secrets of State, I shall unlock the door and announce myself. It is a great shame of the landlord putting us here."

"They will hear all *we* say also," remarked James; "and we by talking loud ourselves can give them to understand that others are within hearing. If they can hear us, they will of course at once conclude that we can hear them."

"I don't know *that*," said Arthur. "I have had such great experiences of human stupidity as an examiner, that I very much doubt it. If this man is an English diplomatist, I fear that the mental process will be too elaborate for him."

They were seated merrily at dinner, when a rumbling in the courtyard announced the arrival. Almost immediately after the door of the next room was thrown open, and the great man entered,—English certainly, but not a courteous diplomatist by any

means, and apparently with few preliminaries of peace about him.

At the first sound of his voice Boginsky said, "Now we will talk louder, then;" but looking at his three companions, he saw that his three companions had laid down their knives and forks, and were looking at one another in blank astonishment.

A loud and familiar voice on the other side of the door thundered out,—

"I don't care. I repeat what I said to the fellow to his face. The whole business is the most preposterous clamjamfry of unutterable nonsense which ever was seen on the face of this earth; and my remedy for it would be to hang the two emperors and the king up in a row."

"But you *didn't* say that to the man, you know," said a bright woman's voice. "You were as mild as milk with him, and only began to rage as soon as his back was turned."

James jumped to his feet.

"I don't care whether I said it or not," said Silcote. "I mean it. And, since you twit me with it, I will go to his hotel after dinner and say it. Now!"

"Remember that you are abroad, Silcote, and be cautious," said the woman's voice.

"I am not likely to forget that I am abroad, my dear soul; the fleas keep me in mind of that; and, as for my caution, why you yourself allow that I did *not* utter the treason of which you disapprove, after all; and for your kind sake I will not."

"Why, that is my father," said Arthur, amazed. "Who on earth is the woman with them?"

"My mother," said James, radiant with smiles.

Arthur grew suddenly sick and faint. He filled out a tumbler full of wine, and drank it off, and muttered half aloud,—

"Mrs. Sugden! O Heaven, why did I ever leave him alone! And so soon after poor Algy's death too! It is horrible. O God, forgive me my selfish neglect; forgive me my share in this miserable business."

Boginsky whispered to Arthur, "I fear we are in a more delicate situation than that of overhearing a diplomat speaking with his secretaries. From the petulance of both Monsieur and Madame towards one another, I should guess that they were just married, and in



their wedding tour. Shall I strike up the Marseillaise? We must do something."

"Pray be silent for a moment," said Arthur. "See, here is another lady with them. I am going mad, and must be taken home straight and put in Bedlam."

For a third voice struck in here—a very pretty voice indeed; but—well, a little too fine-ladyish, the thing just a *very* little overdone. That voice said,—

"So you two are quarrelling again? The very moment I leave you two together you begin at it. What is the matter *now*?"

Arthur sat down again. "It was very like too," he said to Boginsky. "I fear my nerves are not what they should be yet." And Boginsky politely agreed with him.

"*Our* quarrels don't come to much do they, old girl?" said Silcote, and Mrs. Sugden laughed.

James by this time was at the door with his hand on the key. Arthur gently put him aside, threw the door open, and found himself face to face with Miss Lee, in all the full majesty of her unequalled beauty. The meeting was a little more astonishing for her than for him, for he had thought of her when he

heard her voice three minutes before. And in her utter surprise, in a second of time, there passed across her face a sudden expression ; a little parting of the lips, a little brightening of the eyes ; which told him all he cared to know. She was her very ladylike self in one moment, although the twitch of her hands towards him when she saw him had caused her to drop her hundred-guinea travelling-bag, and made a *contretemps*. He knew all that he wanted to know in this world, and merely saying to her pleasantly, "How d'ye do! How d'ye do!" passed on with outstretched hands towards his father, seeing by a mere look at the three faces that there were somehow or other brighter and better times in the house of Silcote than there had been for forty years. "If he *has* married Mrs. Sugden," he thought, "he might have done worse."

Silcote was very much changed, as Arthur saw in one moment. He looked so much younger, and so much more gentle. There was certainly an uncommon change in him.

"My dear father," he said, "this is a strange meeting."

"Very strange indeed, Archy," said Silcote. "I gave myself up frankly and freely to these two ladies to do what they would with me. They have done nothing but plot and conspire against me throughout the whole journey. I declare solemnly that I have never had my own way for one moment since we left Silcotes, and that their standing case against me is obstinacy. Now here they have laid their plans so well, that my own favourite son, whom I believed to be at Boppart, comes bursting in on me, with two of my grandsons, and a foreign gentleman, out of my own bedroom."

"That is not your bedroom, sir," said Arthur, hardly knowing how to begin explanations.

"Is it not? Well, I give up the point. I thought it was. I am still inclined to think it is, because I observe you have been dining in it. However, I have no opinion. These two women have cured me of all that. Now go and kiss your sister-in-law, for she has finished kissing her boy James."

"My sister-in-law."

"Ah! Tom's wife, you know."

"I don't know, sir," said Arthur.

"Don't you?" said Silcote. "It don't matter. Some of them will tell you all about it some day. They are going to the milliner's to-morrow to get some new things to go to the war with: perhaps they will tell you all about it the day after."

"I daresay you wonder to find me in company with James and Reginald, sir," said Arthur, trying if he could get him to talk that way.

"Not I," said Silcote. "I am a perfectly resigned man. If you had been kicking against all sorts of pricks for forty years, you would find it uncommonly pleasant to get into that frame of mind. Bless you, the religionists have flourished on that secret for centuries."

"What secret, sir?"

"The secret of taking a man away from himself, and giving him peace in that way. Some of them have done it more or less viciously and artificially. These two good women have done it for me as well as any priest that ever was born. They have brought *me* back to the communion, a thing *you* never did. What fools you men-priests are! Not one of you seems to have the sense to see that in a perfect state

the priests would be all *women*. You men-priests would be in a queer way without them; they are designed and made for the priesthood. They have quite enough intellect for the office without having too much. And a highly intellectual priest is a mistake; like yourself. And the women have faith, which more than three-quarters of you men-priests have not."

Arthur was shocked. Yet his father's argument puzzled him somewhat. He as a priest had been a failure, and knew it. His father's argument, slightly developed, seemed to him to mean an extreme form of Romanism. Well, even the present state of his father was better than his old one. He changed the subject.

"My dear father, I will wait for explanations about, for instance, my new-found sister-in-law. But allow me to ask, just to start the conversation in a new channel, what on earth you are doing here?"

"My boy, let me first tell you how profoundly I am pleased by meeting you again. I do not want to talk business to-day; and any explanations you may want you may get from Miss Lee."

"Ah!" thought Arthur, "so I will. But, sir, you have not told me what brings you here."

"Well, a variety of matters. The one which is foremost in my mind just now is to get hold of my sister, your aunt, and get reconciled with her and bring her to reason, for I fear she is going on badly."

"How so?" asked Arthur.

"From a frantic letter she has written to me, I fear that she is in the hands of scoundrels, and well-nigh desperate. Kriegsthurm, her old courier, major-domo, go-between in all her idiotic schemings and plottings and follies, has got hold of her again, and he and Tom have drained her of all her money, and made her desperate, I doubt. My original object was a very different one: it may be carried out, and it may not. I wished to right the memory of my first wife. Whether I shall do so or not I cannot say. My first object now is to save my poor sister; it is quite possible that in doing the one thing I may do the other."

"I do not quite understand, sir."

"No, I suppose not," said Silcote gently. "I fear I have been a sad fool, and wasted a life. My dear

Archy, I have one favour to ask you. Do not in any way mention to me at present a death which has recently taken place in our family. I am very sorry, but I cannot speak of it."

"I am loth to speak of it myself, sir," said Arthur.

"I see Reginald is in mourning," said Silcote.  
"How did he bear it?"

"He cried," said Arthur, "once when he heard of it, and once afterwards, James tells me, in the night for a short time."

"I scarcely did more myself, if as much. Remorse does not produce tears. Let us leave the subject."

"About my aunt, sir. What makes you think she is in these straits? Has she appealed to you?"

"Not at all. *Her* letter was only one in which she confessed a recent wrong towards me, prayed my forgiveness, and took farewell of me for ever. I should like to catch her at it," Silcote went on suddenly, and with energy. "I have had the bullying of her for forty years, and does she think I am going to give it up now! These two new ones," he continued, winking at Arthur, "won't stand it. You remember *that* for your soul's health and comfort."

"I will, sir," said Arthur solemnly. "You have had another letter about her, then?"

"Yes," said Silcote, "I have had a letter of nine closely-written pages; a letter which, following me to the continent, has cost me about nine shillings—from that cantankerous old busybody, Miss Raylock. She is dragging her old bones after Tom and your aunt to the war, and has got into your aunt's confidence. I am bound to say that she has written me a most kind, sensible, and womanly letter, on which I am going to act."

"She is capable of doing nothing else, sir."

"That woman has made thousands out of us, with her confounded novels. She has no powers of invention. She put *me* as the principal character in her first successful novel, and made her fortune. She has spent all her money in fancy cucumbers and geraniums, and now she is hunting my sister, for the mere purpose, I am perfectly certain, of putting her as leading character in a novel, and going to her grave with an extra thousand pounds in the Three per Cents. But she will be deceived."

"My aunt the Princess would make a good central figure in a novel, sir."



“No, sir,” said the old man, shaking his head; “her folly is too incongruous; the ruck of common-place fools who read novels will not have sufficient brains to appreciate the transcendental genius of *her* folly. Raylock will make a mess of her. She will be trying to find out motives for her conduct; and my sister hasn’t got any.”

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PRELIMINARIES TO THE TREATY OF TURIN.

"Now then, Mrs. Tom," cried Silcote after a long talk with Arthur, "dinner is ready. I can't live by talking nonsense to curly-headed youngsters, if you can. Arthur, take in Mrs. Tom."

"They have had their dinner, these people," said Mrs. Silcote, "and don't want any more. As for talking nonsense to curly-headed youngsters, you have been talking long enough with Mr. Arthur, and nonsense enough too, I don't doubt."

"That's a specimen," said Silcote, pointing with his finger at the radiantly happy, good-humoured, and kindly face of Mrs. Silcote,—*"that is a specimen of the way they treat me. Go and take her arm, and take her in to dinner. When I was your age, I could eat two dinners. Miss Lee, your arm."*

Arthur, who as yet knew practically nothing, went up to the woman whom his father had introduced to him as his sister-in-law: when he looked at her he said *sotto voce*, "By Jove!" She was probably the most remarkable woman he had ever seen. Tall, as tall as he, with grey hair, and a very beautiful face, handsomely dressed, with every fold of gown or shawl in its right place, standing very calmly in a splendid attitude, and looking him through and through with her great calm grey eyes. As he went up to her, it suddenly struck him as quite a new idea that this was James's mother, Mrs. Sugden, the woman who lived in the little white cottage at the edge of Boisey Hill. How she came to be his sister-in-law he did not inquire. His father was not likely to be wrong in a matter like this: that was the hencoop in which he clung in this wide weltering ocean of astonishment.

He took her in to dinner, and sat between her and Miss Lee. But this wonderful Sugden-Tom-Silcote woman occupied his whole attention. "Heaven save me from Bedlam!" he said; "this is the woman who used to plant beans in a smock frock. This is

the wife of the man that helped to fight the poacher on the very night that James was brought in wounded. Hang it, I can't remember it all."

He remembered, however, that on one occasion, the curate being absent, he had undertaken the cure of the parish, just as he would have undertaken the siege of Sebastopol. And that at that time he had given this terrible lady in grey silk and white lace spiritual consolation, such as he had, and a shilling.

"Bless our family," he thought; "we shall fill Bedlam if we increase. Are you going to say anything to me?" he said suddenly to Mrs. Thomas.

"Why?" said she, calmly.

"Because I thought you were not," said Arthur.

"What shall I say to you?" said she, with perfect good humour.

"Explain matters, that is all; like a good soul as you look. My father's reticence is so exasperating."

Mrs. Thomas explained everything to him from beginning to end, while Miss Lee ate her dinner, drank her wine, folded her napkin, and put it through the ring: went on explaining, while she rose after having only

interchanged a few commonplaces with Arthur, and left the room: went on still explaining until Miss Lee returned *tremendously* dressed, as far as extravagance went, but with wonderful quietness and good taste, with her bonnet on, ready for a promenade. The two boys had gone before, to see some regiments march out.

"I am going on the Boulevards," she said, in a cool and lofty manner. "You people want to stay and talk family matters, which are no concern of mine, and which bore me. The courier said there are three more regiments to march to-night: I hear a band playing, which must belong to one of them. I shall go and see them off."

"Are you going alone, my dear?" said Mrs. Thomas.

"Alone? Certainly. I am used to take care of myself, and perfectly able to do so." And with her splendid chin in the air, she certainly looked as if she was. There is no one more safe from insult than an imperially proud and handsome woman. Cads scarcely dare to look at her in the face, and the worse than cads know from their experience that the most they will get is furious scorn. No one knew this better than Miss Lee. She would have marched up coolly to

the finest knot of dandies in Europe, and asked one of them to call her a cab ; and have driven calmly off in it, with a cold bow of thanks.

"But the officers, cousin," once more interpellated Mrs. Tom.

"I shall probably try to get into conversation with some of them," said Miss Lee, with her bonnet-strings half concealing her beautiful proud chin in the air, "and consult them about the best way of getting as near the fight as possible. The King very likely does not go until to-morrow, and will probably review one of these regiments as they go ; so I shall have a chance of seeing your fat hero. Well, good-bye. I shall be at home by dark, or soon after." And so she went.

Arthur still sat as if he had not heard her speak, sat for five minutes, and then rose and left the room.

Mrs. Thomas was a little indignant. "She gave him time and place in the most obvious manner," she said. "I never saw the thing done more openly in my life."

"I thought she wrapped it up pretty well," said Silcote.

"*You* thought," said Mrs. Thomas. "A deal you know about it. The way she did it was next thing to brazen."

"I hope he knows where to find her," said Silcote, drinking a glass of wine. "I'll be hanged if I should."

"It's lucky that your son is not quite such a stupid," said Mrs. Thomas. "She, with her marching regiments, and the King reviewing them as they passed the palace! Why, there!" she continued, warming, "as sure as ever you sit gandering in that chair, I could go at this moment, on my bare feet, and lay my finger on that woman. She gave him time and place, I tell you, and I could lay my finger on her now."

"Could you indeed, my dear?" said Silcote. "I have no doubt you could. Still I think she wrapped it up pretty well. I know Turin, and she don't. *I* couldn't find her."

"I could," said Mrs. Tom; "I have only to go down into that street——"

"Without your shoes and stockings? You *said* you could find her barefooted."

"——and ask," said Mrs. Tom, scornfully disregarding him, "where the King was reviewing the soldiers. And I should get my answer, and there she'd be, and him with her. Don't tell me."

"I don't want to tell you. But surely this heat is unnecessary."

"Not at all," said Mrs. Tom. "She gave him time and place before my own eyes: and she was too bold—for him."

"It is all right, though, is it not?" said Silcote.

"Oh, it's all *right* enough," said Mrs. Tom. "But after the way he has served her, she had no business to give him time and place as she did. I wish it had been *me*." And she shook her head with deep meaning.

"Do you indeed? So you really wish that you had a chance at Archy? But you must reflect that you could not, under any circumstances, marry your brother-in-law; let me advise you to give up this newly-conceived passion for Arthur, and let him marry your cousin quickly. Two such dreadful tongues as yours and his would never have hit it off together, and moreover——"



"There," said Mrs. Tom, "one mustard seed of nonsense dropped in your way grows into a great tree of nonsense very soon. Do you know that you have to give an account of every idle word you speak? You run off into idle senseless *badi-nage* on the text of one single sentence or word. It is a silly habit."

"Yes, my dear," said Silcote. "As soon as you have done blowing me up, suppose we go and see the soldiers?"

She kissed him, and said, "You are a good old man. I don't know how you ever got on without me."

"Very badly," said Silcote. "Come, let us jog out together, and see this King and these soldiers, you and me."

And so this queer couple jogged out together to gape and stare, like a couple of children, at the soldiers, the King, and everything else abnormal which came in their way. The courteous Italian crowd which made way for the strange pair only admired their *bizarre* beauty. Not one in the crowd dreamt that the life of a son and a husband was at stake, in that terrible hurly-burly so soon to begin to the east. And

indeed they did not realize it themselves, any more than they realized how deeply they loved him ; both believing that their love for him had been killed by his misconduct. Poor fools!

## CHAPTER X.

### THE KING COMES OUT TO MARSHAL THEM.

THEY were singing in the streets of Turin that afternoon. Groups of them were singing war ballads, love ballads. Nay, not only were arm-in-arm groups singing of war, love, loyalty, of everything save law and divinity; but even solitary walkers piped up, quite unnoticed. Therefore why should not Arthur, with a good voice, not untrained by chorus-masters, pipe up too? He did so, however. A spectacle and scandal amongst tutors and ex-proctors, had they only heard him; which they did not. An ex-tutor, singing out, clear and loud, in the streets of a foreign city, was a thing which no one was prepared for in 1859, and, to tell the truth, is scarcely prepared for now; yet he did, this Balliol man, at the top of his very excellent voice.

"I know the way she went  
Past with her maiden posy,  
For her feet have touched the meadows,  
And have left the daisies rosy."

The street was extremely crowded, but every one was nearly mad with good humour; and Arthur's handsome face was so radiant, that innumerable people greeted him. "A glorious day for Italy, milord," said one. "Very much so indeed," replied Arthur. "We have the sympathies of England, if not her arms, on our side, sir," said another. "Our sympathies are in Italy while our arms are in Hindostan," replied Arthur; which was thought to be wonderfully neat, and was bandied about: for it did not take much to please them *that* day. "Confound it," thought Arthur, "I am being too agreeable; I know I shall get myself kissed directly, and I hate it. But I can't help it."

All this time Miss Lee was sailing on before him, with her veil up, calmly, imperial, looking every one straight in the face, and speaking to any one who spoke to her. She attracted universal and respectful attention. Arthur was proud of her.

The great rendezvous was in the Grand Place. Along the street in which they were came a regiment of blue-

coated, steel helmeted, grey-trouserèd cavalry to join it. The enormously high-piled ornate houses were hung with green, white, and red tri-colours from paving to coping-stone, and the windows were thronged with frantic patriots, as were also the streets. It was a splendid and exciting sight; and, as they all went rushing along the narrow street in the rear of the regiment, Arthur's long, dark days of sickness and loss of hope seemed indefinitely removed.

At last they came to the place of the spectacle. *Their* regiment was the last. Three regiments of cavalry and four of infantry were already drawn up; and, there was the big-chested King himself; and there was Cavour, and there were Generals La Marmora, Fanti, Cialdini—men whose names sound like the ringing of silver bells. Their regiment formed in, and the burly King began to move. Arthur perceived that Miss Lee had got an uncommonly good place, and then found himself face to face with Boginsky.

"A glorious day for Italy," said Boginsky.

"It threatens thunder!" said Arthur.

"And lightning," said Boginsky, who was in company with several "reds."

"How epigrammatic we all are!" said Arthur. "I myself have said the neatest thing to-day I have said for years. Why, this excitement would sharpen the wits of a mere horse," he continued artfully.

"Of a mere stupid horse, indeed," replied the innocent Boginsky.

"Sharpen his wits so much that he lets the man get on his back. And now they both go away together to kill the stag. Will the man get off when the stag is dead, do you think?"

"The Emperor would never dare ——," began Boginsky.

"Never for a moment," said Arthur; "no one ever dreamt that he would. He is at Genoa now, because he did not dare to keep away. He wants no more black cricket-balls studded with gun nipples, and percussion caps on them. I was not thinking of him."

Said Boginsky, "you puzzle me."

Arthur folded his arms, caught Boginsky's eye, and then looked steadily at the King of Sardinia, who was now within six yards of them. He took off his hat to the King; and as he went past Boginsky towards Miss Lee, he looked into that gentleman's face with a strong

stare, which meant volumes. As he went he heard Boginsky gasp out,—

“He had *better*.”

Delighted with the purely gratuitous mischief which he had made, Arthur got to the side of Miss Lee just as the King had caught sight of her. There was no doubt whatever of his Majesty's admiration, about which Miss Lee cared just absolutely nothing at all. She wanted a real good stare at the King, and she got one. If he liked the looks of her it showed his good taste; in the perfect boldness of her perfect innocence it was perfectly indifferent whether he looked at her or not. *She* wanted to look at him, and the more he looked the more she saw.

Arthur, proudly laughing in his heart, whispered to her, “Take my arm,” and she put her hand upon it. In one moment more, unseen of any one, his hand was upon hers, as it lay upon his arm, and their two hands were tightly locked together. Not a word was spoken; what need for words, clumsy words, when their two hands told their tale so truly?

Silcote with Mrs. Tom went gandering about, staring at the soldiers and the shops, and enjoying themselves

thoroughly. Silcote bought a large white umbrella lined with green, which took his fancy, and which he used as a pointer, to point out objects of interest to Mrs. Tom ; among other things, pointing out the King when his Majesty was not four yards from the ferule.

At last they got home, and heard that Miss Lee was home before them. Mrs. Thomas went to seek her, and soon returned.

"It's all right," she said ; "I knew it would be. There, you needn't throw your umbrella across the room like a lunatic ; though Heaven knows, my dear, I am as glad as you are."



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DESERTION OF THE BOYS.

"LET me introduce my friend and travelling companion, Count Boginsky," said Arthur to his father.

"I am delighted to know you, sir," said Silcote, frankly and pleasantly. "I hear from Arthur that you are actually good enough to come to the war with us as *cicerone*. It is a piece of good luck on which we could not possibly have reckoned."

"Nor I either," said Boginsky. "I shall really believe that times are going to change for the better with me."

"They are, sir, they are," said the Squire. "Believe it, sir, that these great concussions shake things into their places. We are going to see a very great thing, sir. I begin to imagine, a very great thing indeed. I am sorry for poor Austria, for I tell you

honestly that, with all her political folly, I have a sneaking kindness for Austria. But the world will gain."

"Then you are perfectly sure that Austria is to be beaten?"

"In the nature of things. Do *you* doubt? Her cause is not just."

"She fights well, however," said Boginsky, "and her cause is as just now as it was in '49, when she won. I think it is a very doubtful business indeed, sir."

"And Italy?" said Silcote, interested.

"Italia is not yet," said Boginsky; "she may be next month, next year, fifty years hence; but she is not yet. We go to see the dice thrown for her."

"I should like to have seen a red-coated regiment or two in the hurly-burly," said the Squire. "Merely on sentimental grounds."

"One would have liked to see the red-coats also, we democrats," said Boginsky, "but it is not expected of England. England has accepted Democracy as the breath of her nostrils only in a modified form as yet, but the sacred spirit will show itself perfect. England's mission is to disseminate democracy in new

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"You look grave. Is anything wrong?"

"I think that nothing is wrong," said Boginsky. "But that very much depends on how you will take it. Have you seen your grandson, Reginald, since last night?"

"No. At my time of life I have given up all idea of being treated with proper respect by boys. I had concluded that he and his cousin James had gone for an expedition into the country, to get out of my way."

"I pointed out to your grandson, and to James Sugden, that they were not behaving well, but I could make no impression on them whatever. Mr. Sugden was spokesman, and gave me my commission to Mr. Arthur. He said that they were exceedingly sorry to cause any annoyance, but that they had made up their minds, and, to save words, had done it secretly, because they knew that James's mother (the beautiful grey-haired lady, I believe) and the Squire would have objected to it, and would not have permitted it for a moment."

"What have the two young fools done now, then, in the name of confusion?" demanded the Squire.

"They requested me to point out the fact," continued Boginsky, unheeding him, but going through his commission, "that women would be in the way, and that they were determined to see it; and also that they had plenty of money for the present, and that, when it ran short, they would send to you for more."

"This story begins to hold together," said the Squire; "I can quite understand this part of it. No doubt they will. But what have they done?"

"Then, as a last resource, having used all my own arguments, I appealed to the Colonel himself. I pointed out to him that Reginald was risking your good favour by taking such a step, and that James Sugden's mother had only just arrived from England. He laughed at me. He said that it was good for them, and took them away. I never yet got the best of my friend Frangipanni."

"Frangipanni!" exclaimed the Squire. "What on earth has he been doing with my boys? What is this?"

"Count Frangipanni is colonel of the 18th regiment of the Sardinian light horse, which marched last

night.\* Reginald Silcote and James Sugden were his two favourite pupils in his Italian class at St. Mary's Hospital. He has seduced them away with him to go and make sketches of the war, and has promised to take them under fire; which he probably will do; as he is one of the bravest men in Europe, and as they would follow him down the crater of Vesuvius."

"This is very pleasant, Arthur," said Silcote. "This is thoroughly pleasant."

"Lucky young dogs," said Arthur: "they promised to stick by me. I would go after them if I could get franked by a colonel."

"They will be killed," said the Squire.

"Most likely," said Arthur. "But they will have taken some bad sketches first, which we shall find on their corpses."

"How shall we break it to Mrs. Tom?" said the Squire.

"Tell her all about it the next time she comes into

\* Not to deprive brave men of their glory, even for a moment, in a work of fiction, it is necessary to say that the men of Genestrello were the regiment at Montferrat (with some squadrons of other regiments) under command of General Sonnaz.

the room," replied Arthur; "I should say that was the best way. If you are afraid, let me."

"It will be a terrible shock to her," said the Squire.

"She has been under fire herself in the Crimea more than once," said Arthur. "She will not care much. They might have taken me with them, I think. Here she is. Mrs. Tom, James has bolted to the front, and is going under fire. Hallo, what is this?"

"Only my old dress as field-nurse in the Crimea," she said quietly. "I found out why he was gone, and I got ready to go after him. I should suggest marching myself, if we are to see anything at all. The last regiment goes to-morrow; and, as far as I can gather from the soldiers, the causeways are narrow, and our carriages will get hampered among commissariat waggons if we delay. I should have proposed marching in the rear of Frangipanni's regiment, if I had known that the boys were to give us the slip. We had better order the carriages at eight to-morrow morning."

From this time she and Boginsky took the lead. She dressed in grey with a modest hood, looking so

much like some sort of *sœur de charité*, that she got the route everywhere, and carried her train with her. Miss Lee carried her silks and satins through the scenes which came afterwards, attended by Arthur, who kept the dress of an English parson.



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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE FAMILY BEGINS TO DRAW TOGETHER.

WHETHER it was the fault of Count Frangipanni, or of James, that the latter took the extraordinary step of running away from the newly-united party, is one of those things which it is hardly necessary to make clear. Whichever of them originated the idea, it was soon acted on. There is one thing certain—that the Count took the most elaborate pains to point out to James that if he stayed with the carriages he would see absolutely nothing. James did not want much encouraging. "If we argue and ask leave, Reginald," he said, "we shall never have leave to go. Let us bolt."

"Certainly," said Reginald. And so they commissioned Boginsky, whom they met in the crowd, to arrange matters for them in the best way he could.

When they commissioned him to say that they had money enough for the present, they spoke the truth. Their money, however, looked a great deal smaller after they had bought a couple of little horses. But, as James said, they were going with the winning army, and would make requisitions on the conquered territory. Besides, they had their watches, and at least ten pounds a piece. A real schoolboy will go into any adventure with a pound in his pocket.

Boginsky might have supplemented his commission from them to Arthur, by mentioning that he had bought their horses and saddles for them, getting these articles for them, by means of his democratic connexion, at about half the price they could have got them for themselves; moreover, that he had spent the evening of the previous day in getting away their painting tackle, money, and clothes, and conveying them to the little café at which they were rebelliously lodging. He suppressed these latter facts entirely. The fact is that he would have liked to go himself, but felt bound in honour to stay by Arthur. And, indeed, with his political character, he was much safer in the rear than in the front; so, under

the *civis Romanus ægis*, he travelled in Silcote's barouche.

The boys were pleased at their escapade. The troopers liked them, and they liked the troopers. England, said the Italians, the free country of Europe, sympathized with the cause, although political complications elsewhere happened to prevent her assisting in it, as *they* had assisted in the Crimea. Yet she had sent her best blood (according to Frangipanni) to look on, even if they could not fight. They were in perfect good-humour with the English, these troopers, and considered James in the light of a political demonstration. To him personally they were devoted, like every one else;—"the only agreeable person which your family has ever produced," said Miss Raylock of him afterwards to the assembled Silcotes.

They went on under the bright May weather, fast and far, through pleasant ways across the lower slopes of the Apennines. But few people were about, and those got fewer as they went on. Our two friends could make little or nothing of the plans of the campaign, and indeed cared little whether the

Austrians would test the right or the left of their position ; all they cared about were the incidents.

They had a very pleasant incident one warm May day. Travelling over nearly plain open meadows, planted here and there with mulberries, keeping the green, abrupt hills on their right, they came to a stream by a village, and by this stream lay a battalion of French soldiers, some of whose officers came and fraternized, but the body of which lay and sat still. The stream in which these two audacious youths watered their horses was the Fossagazzo, the village was Genestrello. The French battalion which lay on the grass was a battalion of the 74th, under General Cambriels ; but little they knew or cared about these details. The two simple-minded youths were at the extreme breaking-point of a great wave, the foremost wave of a sea which was to burst over, and regenerate, nay make, a kingdom ; but they were utterly unconscious of it. The place was picturesque, and the day warm. Further on the scenery seemed to promise better. They rode in advance of the troops along the broad dusty road, and turned off into a hedgeless field on the left, lay down on the grass, and,

letting their tired horses graze, took their dinner of sausage, bread, and wine.

Then they began sketching. The field was wide and open, with here and there a tree. Before, and close to them, was the broad and dusty highway, separated from them by a little ditch and a few shaped stones at regular intervals. Beyond, but close to them, was a handsome collection of Italian buildings; a church notably; an inn; a larger building than either of these, probably a country gentleman's house; all noble-looking, of yellow stone, with red roofs and dormer windows; behind all a wooded hill. It was a place which the idlest tourist would like to sketch, with or without an incident. They were lucky enough to see a remarkable incident, but were too much scared to introduce it into their landscape.

Their friends were well in sight on their right, and it was dinner-time with them as with James and Reginald; yet their friends were taking no dinner whatever. Their friends the Sardinian cavalry were on the move again, and soon passed them along the road at a foot pace.

"Shall we go with them?" said Reginald.

"We can catch them up," said James. "We will finish our sketches."

And so they finished them.

It was late when they had finished them, and they wanted their supper. They bethought them of going over to the group of houses which they had been sketching, on the other side of the road. One of these they found was a rather good inn, the landlord of which was perfectly willing to receive them. He remarked to them,—

"Live men to-day, dead men to-morrow. An inn to-day, a hospital the day after. Come in, gentlemen, but pay beforehand; the dead do not pay as a rule."

They acquiesced in his demand of payment beforehand, and satisfied him. Then they had their supper, and discussed whether it was worth while or not to follow Frangipanni and his light horse so late. They could easily follow him in the morning, they agreed, and the quarters were good. So they stayed, and went out in front of the inn to smoke.

The jollity of their march seemed to have departed. None of the officers from the battalion of French which was lying so close to them were swarming in and out

of the inn, as is their custom. There was none of that brisk, merry, good-humoured babble between officers, men, and civilians which makes the arrival of a French regiment so agreeable. The officers seemed all to be lying down by the brook with their men to-night, thinking of quite other things than absinthe and dominoes. Our friends began to get sorry that they had not gone on with Frangipanni's light horse.

Only one French officer was in front of the inn when they sauntered out to smoke,—a thickset man, with a grey moustache and shaven cheeks, with the scarlet side of his cloak turned outside, and much gold about him, who also walked up and down smoking. "Evidently," said James, "a swell: the very man to consult." If he had known that it was General Forey it would not have made much difference; for, if he had ever known, he had completely forgotten, what General Forey had done, or had left undone. How many of my readers remember?

James, cap in hand, and schoolboy French in his mouth, went up to General Forey, and confided to him that they, two young English artists, were

travelling with Frangipanni's light horse, and had got left behind. The General, also cap in hand, told him politely that if he remained where he was he would be extremely likely to meet his friends, Messieurs of the Sardinian light horse, once more; and so bowed himself politely out of the audience.

They saw soon afterwards that he was joined by two staff-officers, that his orderly brought his horse from the stable, and that he rode sharply off, in the direction by which they had come.

They lay in the field in front of the house till it was late, and then went to bed and slept quite quietly. Their Italian was but poor, such as they had got from Frangipanni at school, or they might have learnt much. In the morning, trusting to the French General's opinion that their friends would return by the same route, they quietly had their breakfast, went across the road, and lay in the shade of a mulberry-tree, smoking, and touching up their sketches.

There was the broad and dusty road, divided from the field by shaped stones; beyond, the yellow-and-red pile of buildings, one of which was their inn;



beyond, the pleasant wooded hill ; to the left, heights crowned with important-looking buildings. And now came their incident.

In a cloud of dust their friends of the Sardinian light horse came along the highway at a slinging trot the way they had gone, fulfilling General Forey's prediction. Our youths knew nearly every face in the regiment, and a merrier set of fellows they had never seen ; yet every face was grave enough now. The last man who passed them was Frangipanni, bringing up the rear. The regiment passed them about three hundred yards, and then, at a few notes of the bugle, wheeled each man in his own ground, and was at once formed in column of squadrons on the road ; Frangipanni, having wheeled with them, standing sole and solitary at their head.

For a few minutes there was silence. The Sardinian light horse had scarcely settled themselves in their places when the silence was broken. James and Reginald were still innocently looking at their old friends, drawn up across the road, and trying to make out the faces of the officers who were most familiar to them, when they were startled by the infinitely

inharmonious, yet deeply terrible, crashing, trampling, and clanking of another regiment of cavalry, approaching along the high road from their left.

Reginald saw them first, for James was staring at Frangipanni. "Here is another regiment," said Reginald, "all in white. These will be the French."

James looked round once, and shook him fiercely by the shoulder. "Get up!" he said, "here are the Austrians upon us, and we are in the thick of the whole thing."

"The who?" said Reginald.

"The *Austrians*, you ass," said James. "Get up, will you! Who in heaven or earth would ever have thought of this? Run, scud, get out of the way, get on your legs at any rate, and, if we get involved in it keep your arms above your head, and keep on your feet. Get hold of a stirrup if you can, but run with the horses, and get out of it as quick as you are able. By Jove, who would have thought of this?"

Reginald, though he scarcely understood what was coming, behaved very well. He ran with James some ten yards into the meadow, and then they both

turned to look on war itself, as few have looked on it.

The Austrians halted. They knew that the French were there, and the French had got a terrible prestige since the Crimea, which they have maintained. The Austrian colonel halted his men for one instant, and rode forward towards the ravine alone before them all to see if the concealed French could be tempted into opening fire at him. He went within pistol-shot of Count Frangipanni; but the French knew the business of war, and he saw nothing but the Sardinian regiment of light horse.

"Look at that glorious Austrian colonel," said James. "There is a man who don't mind death. I wish to heaven that their cause was better. Watch that Austrian colonel. Did you ever see such a noble fellow in your life? See how he sits his horse; I confess that my principles would give way under the influence of such a man."

"I think I know him," said Reginald.

"What are they going to do?" said the excited James. "Viva Italia! By heavens, our fellows are going to charge!"

Who gave the order for the first charge at Genestrello, Tom Silcote or Aurelio Frangipanni? The result is the same. A thousand men on each side, mounted on horseback, with drawn swords in their hands, in column of troops, rode fiercely at one another, trying to slay one another, happily with little effect. The first two troops on either side got themselves, to a certain extent, bruised, shaken, and cut about with swords; while the rearward troops drew rein, and did nothing until the bugle gave the word to the Italian cavalry to right about face, which they did accordingly.

Count Frangipanni and Colonel Silcote, however, seemed rather loth to part, for each had found in the other a good swordsman. For full half a minute, after the Italian retreat had sounded, these two were alone together, fencing cautiously and keenly, yet with apparently perfect good humour. Colonel Silcote was the first to rein his horse back, and say, "You must follow your men, Colonel. Your major, seeing you so busy, has sounded the retreat." Frangipanni saluted politely, smiled, and trotted off after his regiment, while the Austrians prepared to advance.

"Our fellows are beaten then?" said James, with an air of discontent. "I cannot see why; they seem to do quite as well as the others; but I suppose that the Major knows what he is about. Frangipanni gave no orders. There goes my Austrian colonel off at a sling trot after them. I hope he won't come to grief."

"*Your* Austrian colonel, you turncoat!" said Reginald.

"Yes, mine," said James, emphatically. "I like the look of that man. I would go to the devil after that man."

"He is one of the accursed Tedeschi," said Reginald. "What would our comrades say?"

"I don't know, and I don't care," replied James. "He is a much finer fellow than any of the Italians, except Frangipanni. He saved Frangipanni from being taken prisoner. I heard him give him the office to cheese it," went on James, reproducing, in his admiration, a very old London vulgarism. "That man is a noble gentleman, if he were fifty Tedeschi."

"So he is," said a voice, apparently from high up in the air. "You never said a truer word than that,

James Sugden. Who ever dared to say that he was not? Do you remember the night when he carried you, a poor bruised and bleeding little hind, into Silcotes, away from the poachers, and made your fortune at the expense of his own?"

To turn and find our old friend, the Princess—sitting on a tall bay horse, in a blue riding-skirt, with a white bodice, a wideawake hat and cock's feathers, and a revolver at her right pommel—was a very small surprise. After having looked on, at twenty yards' distance at a charge of cavalry, in which some eight were killed, and some twelve left howling and moaning in the road, one is not inclined to be surprised at anything. James merely took off his hat, and said, "Madam, I scarcely hoped to have the pleasure of seeing you here." Reginald said nothing whatever, but stared at his aunt, open-mouthed.

"I dare say not," she answered. "I am following Colonel Silcote's regiment. How did you come here?"

"We came with the Sardinian light horse, sketching, my lady."

"You might have been in better company," said the Princess. "Why did you not come on our side?"

"Our sympathies are Italian, my lady. Do I understand you that the colonel we saw just now was Colonel Silcote?"

"Did you not recognise him?"

"I do now. Reginald, you said that you thought you knew him. But I should scarcely have recognised my own father, in such a place, and in such a uniform."

"Are you here on foot? Where are your horses?"

"Across the road, my lady."

"You had better get them. Is there any force of French on this brook here, the Fossagazzo?"

"I decline to answer that question, my lady," said James. "Reginald, I hope you were not going to speak. Hold your tongue, sir. How dare you?"

"Well, I suppose you are right," said the Princess, good-humouredly. "Here comes Urban; we shall know soon. Hark! there is infantry there, and French infantry. You might have told me without doing any harm. They are in force, are they not? Is it Forey? Get your horses, you young simple-

tons, get your horses, and come back across the road to me again. Do not lose a moment."

They ran across and got out their horses and were back with her in less than five minutes, abandoning their heavy baggage; for there was a sound in their ears, familiar to us now, which they had never heard before.

It was rapid musketry firing. At first only crackling like the burning of the gorse on the hills above St. Mary's, but growing heavier every moment, until it roared out in heavy crashes, which shook the air even where they stood, and brought a few heavy drops of rain from the summer clouds which floated overhead. When they got back to her they found her in the same position, gazing intensely at the dip in the broad dusty road about a quarter of a mile to their right, from which came furious volleys of musketry, and a general raging confusion, which showed them that they had pushed too far for safety, and were actually at the very point where the two armies would decide their first struggle.

The Princess was perfectly calm. "Tell me,



James Sugden, as a gentleman to a lady, is Forey there?"

And James answered, "I believe he is, my lady."

"In force?"

"I decline."

"You are right. Well, with his present reputation, he will fight hard to regain his former one. You will take care of a poor old woman in case the poor Tedeschi are beaten back?"

"Madame, I am entirely at your service," said James.

"You will keep with me, then?"

"Certainly," said James.

"The Italians would murder me, and you are well *répandu* among them. Keep by me. I hold you on your honour as a gentleman."

"Here come the Austrians back again," exclaimed James.

And indeed the cavalry were returning along the road in some confusion, followed by their friends of the light horse. At the same moment, possibly the very first rifled cannon bullet ever fired in anger tore up the ground near the Princess, and covered her with dust

"We may as well move a little further," she said; "this is too close to be pleasant."

It was a very reasonable suggestion; so they trotted along till they were fairly past the village of Genestrello, and then paused and looked about them.

Opposite to them were two abrupt, rounded, and partly wooded hills, about half a mile off, the one on their right crowned by a single large building with a campanile, the one to the left by a village with another campanile. A small hollow divided the two hills, and they saw that the French army, battalion after battalion, was already swarming up the right-hand towards the solitary building, under a heavy fire from the solitary building, the summit of the hill, and the village on the other hill.

The firing got more fast and furious every moment. The right-hand hill was rapidly blackening with the swarming French, who were bringing up artillery; and far away some Sardinian cavalry were seen charging up the hill. The first hill seemed to be doomed, in which case there seemed but small chance for the second.

Genestrello was carried too, for the roar grew

louder and nearer, and broken regiments began to pass them, from which men fell out, and sat down and began feebly and pitiaibly to try to get at their wounds. It was certainly time to move, for the cannon-shot were ripping and crashing amongst the trees, and the summit of the first hill was a mere raging volcano. And which way were they to go, except away from the French?

As they went, they saw the village on the second hill carried; and lo, it was evening, and the day had passed like an hour. The battle of Montebello was over and won. Night was coming on, and the Austrians were in retreat. They had "felt" for the French and found them. Montebello showed pretty clearly which way the campaign was to go. If they were unable to hold such a position as that, what would be the result elsewhere?

## CHAPTER XIII.

### JAMES AND HIS FATHER.

THE Princess cared little for Montebello. Her horror at Tom Silcote's going to the campaign had ended in her determining to go with him, and she had accompanied his regiment in the way we have seen; riding parallel with his regiment, with which she was quite familiar, and which she may be said to have joined; and seeing almost the very first blood drawn, and having witnessed the battle of Montebello from a quiet field, without being very dangerously under fire at all.

This would have been enough for the ambition of most amateur lady-soldiers, but she thought nothing of it. The day of Montebello was a triumph for her foolish soul, for she had succeeded in deluding

James hopelessly across into the Austrian lines, and she considered that a great stroke of business.

The foolish plans which they had made against this young man have been discussed before. None of his enemies had the slightest idea about his real claims to be a dangerous person, with regard to the Silcotes succession, and its almost hopeless entanglement. He was looked on as the "dangerous horse," however; and she prided herself on her dexterity in tempting him into the Austrian lines. "We have him in our power now," she said to herself, scarcely knowing what she meant.

She could not dream, of course, that she was only in the way of introducing the boy to his own father. Let our story tell itself.

The Austrian left was withdrawn hastily that night towards the Sesia: there was great confusion. The Princess and our two friends rode together into Casteggio about eight o'clock; and there found ranged warlike order, with warlike disorder dribbling through it to the rear of it, to become orderly again.

Our friends had lost their Austrian regiment, and waited for it at Casteggio. It was in a sad plight.

General Blanchard had brought up with him some of this infernal new artillery, and had played sad mischief with them. The regiment was passed on through Casteggio towards the rear, wearied, disheartened, and half cut to pieces. They thought for a time that Tom Silcote was not with them, but was killed; but last of all, bringing up the rear of his straggling and wearied squadrons, he came with a bloody face, bareheaded, holding his reins in his sword-hand, and his left arm hanging loosely beside him.

"He is hit," said the Princess. And they joined him.

"I have got a graze on my left arm from a French bullet," he said, cheerily, "not to mention a wipe over the head from that jolly old Italian colonel. I thought I was a swordsman till I met him."

"Wretch!" said the Princess; "after your saving his life this morning!"

"Not at all, Aunt. A jolly old cock, every inch of him. We only politely renewed our fencing match, and he only cut me over the head and apologised."

"What is the name of this Italian colonel of yours," asked the Princess of James, "who accepts his life in the morning, and tries to assassinate the man who saved him an hour afterwards?"

"Count Frangipanni," said James, without comment.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Princess. "How strangely things come round. He might have been excused for cutting off *my* head, I don't deny. In fact, I should have told him so afterwards, the very next time I met him. But he has no grudge against you."

"He hasn't any grudge. Don't be silly. Who are these two young men with you?"

"Your nephew Reginald and his friend."

"Then—not you, Reginald, but Reggy's friend—I am going to give you some trouble. Strange, I seem to have said those very words before. I am sure I have. I am very slightly hit, and am not in the least degree feverish. I am *certain* that I said those words before, at some time or another, or, at least, words almost exactly like them."

"You did, sir," said James, quietly; "and to me."

"I think I remember your face; and I am sure

that I like it. Our billet is at Pozzo d'Orno. Will you come on with us?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Have you a good set of nerves? Can you help a surgeon? I am hit, but not heavily. I must be with my regiment in three or four days. I don't know whether the ball is in my arm or not. Will you nurse me? I can't reward you, but I am determined to see this thing out. Will you help me to it by nursing me?"

"I will, most cheerfully, sir."

"*I* am the person to nurse you, Tom," broke out the Princess. "I will have no interference from any quarter whatever between you and me. At all events, I will not see you poisoned or assassinated under my own eyes, and me standing looking on. You do not know what you are doing; you do not know in whose hands you are trusting your life. You are throwing away the benefits of one of the most extraordinary dispositions of Providence which, under me, have ever been accomplished——"

"Don't be foolish," said Colonel Tom, peevish with his wound; "I want some one to see to me, and



I choose this young man, and I will have him, by——”

“Have Reginald,” cried the Princess. “If it was the last word I ever spoke, have Reginald.”

“He is too great an ass, and you are too fussy. I shall have this young man.”

“Hear his name,” said the Princess. “His name is James Sugden.”

“You know I have my own opinions about *that* matter, Aunt. Sugden, will *you* stay with me a couple of days, and trust me as I trust you?”

“I cannot understand her Highness’s allusions,” said James, simply. “I only know that, years ago, you kindly and gently carried me to Silcotes, after I had been beaten by the poachers; and that her Highness as kindly and as gently received me. God knows, sir, that I would do anything possible to repay your kindness, or hers.”

“Stick by me, then. I want an English face. So you are that young monkey, hey? I remember it all. What a pretty little dog you were! Like a little fox.”

"I am not pretty now, then sir?" said James, smiling, and looking steadily at him.

"No; decidedly not."

"You do not like the look of me, sir?"

"I like the look of you only too well. Where did you get those pleasant steady eyes of yours?"

"My eyes are said to be like my mother's, sir," replied James, who thought that the Colonel was, in spite of his denial, wandering a little, and who wished to humour him.

"I wish you would get another pair," said Tom Silcote. "Your eyes are unpleasantly like another pair of eyes into which I used to look years ago, and have never forgotten, boy—never forgotten,—never forgotten. I suppose *she* will come, too, at the great gathering at the end of all things."

He was certainly feverish with his wound. The Princess, after her last rebuff, rode apart with Reginald, and poured her grief into his bosom. She did not like him, but she must tell her woes to some one, and so Reginald got the benefit of them now.

"What I have done for that man," she said, "and now he says I am fussy! Reginald, pray that you

may never know the bitterness of ingratitude in those you love. It is the bitterest thing you will ever know."

"I have no doubt it is, Aunt. Can you tell me where is Anne?"

"At Vienna. After all I have done for him! Reginald, he does not love me! It is very bitter to me; he prefers a smooth-faced boy to me, who have sacrificed everything for him. Reginald, my dear, was your grandfather very intimate with this lad James?"

"Intimate? No. He never liked him. You say that Anne is at Vienna. I do not like this at all. I wish I was at Vienna with her."

"You will never have such a chance of seeing war again."

"I dare say not, and I don't wish it. I want to go to Vienna, and I have not enough money. I wish you would lend me some."

"I am sorry I cannot do so," said the Princess. "He wants it all."

So talking, they got to the little village of Pozzo d'Orno, well to the Austrian rear, and halted at last.

Colonel Silcote was decidedly feverish, but kept to his resolution of moving with his regiment, as soon as it was ready to move. Meanwhile, he banished the Princess and Reginald, on the very rude grounds which he had stated above, that the one fussed, and that the other was a fool, and imperiously insisted on James's ministrations, in the very way in which men, who have been spoilt by women all their lives, do demand the services of other people—and, in nine cases out of ten, get them.

He took a strange fancy, almost a passion, for this son of his, thrown in his way so strangely, little dreaming why. The young man's eyes he remembered to be like other eyes not seen for twenty years; but he had forgotten, or thought he had forgotten, his deserted wife's voice; yet James's voice was strangely pleasant and soothing to him. He did not connect the eyes and the voice together at all; yet they had the effect of making him silent, very thoughtful, and more gentle than he had been for years.

"He insists that no one shall come near him but you," said the dismissed Princess, with a sniff. "You had better go and see what *you* can do with a man who

has cast off, in his base ingratitude, those who have sacrificed everything for him. He will curse and swear at you, and try to strike you, but I daresay you will not mind that."

"Not a bit," said James.

The Princess was as far right in what she said as this: Tom Silcote, a terrible bully, would most certainly, at ordinary times, have sworn at *her*, or at any one else, who had kindly tried to assist him when he most wanted assistance. It is the way of some men to be fractious and brutal as soon as they are thrown entirely on the kindness and love of those whose lives are bound up in theirs; and it was his way generally. Not so now. He swore a good many oaths at his uniform, his shirt, his own clumsiness, Giulai's stupidity, and so on; but none at James.

"Come here and help me to peel, lad," he said, "and see if you and I cannot pull through it without the doctors. What frightful humbugs they are! It would not take many hours to learn *their* trade, as far as I have any experience."

"You have not had much knowledge of them, I should think, sir," said James, after he had gently

removed his shirt, and the whole magnificent torso of his father lay bare before him. "Men who carry such a chest as yours are but poor customers to the doctors. Your poor brother, Mr. Algernon, knew more of them than you are likely to do. He loved his doctors dearly. It was taking him away from his doctors that killed him, I doubt."

"Killed him? Algy?" cried Colonel Silcote, starting up.

"He is dead, sir."

"Dead! Why, that was the finest fellow that ever was born, I tell you. It is impossible."

"I quite agree with you in your estimate of him, sir; but he is dead and buried for all that; and I am engaged to his daughter."

"It is an infernal shame," said the Colonel.

"I hope you will be brought to look upon your niece's engagement differently in time, sir," said James, purposely misunderstanding him on religious grounds. "Do you think that you could make it agreeable to yourself to be quiet for a few minutes, while I see what is the matter."

The Colonel submitted.

"Here is a nasty blue-red cut over the surface of the deltoid," said James; "but you have lost very little blood. We must have the doctor to this; it is beyond me."

"If I do I'll be ——"

"Invalided, you were going to say. Not at all. It is a mere scratch. How about this broken head of yours, Colonel? The Count seems to have given you the St. George. Let me look at it."

Tom Silcote submitted his curly, splendidly-shaped head to the inspection of his son quite quietly. James pronounced once more for the doctor, and carried his point. The doctor was introduced—a small Czech gentleman, the glory and pride of whose life was that he had been born and bred at Zuckmantel. Why he was proud of being a Zuckmantel man no one ever knew; but he gloried in it, and was personally offensive in many ways to Colonel Silcote.

The doctor thought he was going to speak first, but he was mistaken. Silcote raised himself on the sofa from his hips, casting off the uniform coat which James had put over him, and opened fire on the doctor in German, before he had time to mention Zuckmantel.

"Now look here, you doctor. I wish you to understand my case at once. I am wounded slightly, and want to be set right instantly. I want to be fighting again in two days from this time."

"The great Frederick, passing through Zuckmantel," began the doctor.—

"—— the great Frederick, and Zuckmantel, and you," said Tom Silcote. "I tell you that I want to fight again in two days. Will you come and look at me, or will you not? You and your Zuckmantels and Fredericks. If you can do anything for me, say so.—If you can't, go. This is the most miserable little humbug in Europe," he added to James in English.

The little doctor looked at him on the head and in the arm, and said that he must be invalided.

"Look here," said Tom Silcote. "If you declare me invalided, I will denounce you to-morrow. You are taking pay from a Government which you are trying to overturn. You are a leading member of the Democratic Committee of Breslau, if you are not president. I have letters of yours which would condemn you ten times over. How did I get them? Why, your



friend Kriegsturm gave them to me as a safeguard when I came on this campaign, so that I might hold them in terror over you. He was afraid that you would poison me—a fate which I have avoided by taking internally none of your filthy drugs. If you invalid me to Vienna, you go to Spandau the next day.”

The doctor examined him again, while James, sitting behind his father, parted his hair for the doctor's examination.

The doctor took a different view of the matter this time. The cut on the head was a slight scalp wound now, of no consequence. The wound on the arm was merely a skin graze, with a great deal of ecchymosis, undoubtedly. There was no reason why the Colonel should be invalided. He applied his remedies.

“You are helping to ruin your cause, you doctor,” said Tom Silcote, when he had finished his work. “I am better already. In two days, thanks to you, I shall be fit for my work again. At the throat of you scoundrelly, half-concealed democrats, sword in hand.”

"You should not have said that," said James, when the doctor was gone.

"Why not?" asked Tom Silcote.

"Well, it was not gentlemanly, and their cause is the best, you know."

"Not the cause of a creeping little toad like that. He takes Austrian money."

"I do not speak of him. I speak of the Sardinian cause against the Austrian. I am an Italian at heart."

"I doubt that I am also," said Tom Silcote; "but you cannot sympathize with the miserable spawn which both sides use, and which both sides despise. Now let me sleep; I am very tired with marching and fighting, and I want rest."

The little Zuckmantel doctor, who makes his first and last appearance here, had given James orders that the Colonel's arm must be dressed again in the middle of the night. He added, also, that he entirely forgave the Colonel for swearing at and denouncing him. He was an Englishman, as was also Monsieur, and the English always swore and denounced when poorly.

James lay beside his father on the floor, and not having slept, arose between twelve and one, and prepared to awaken him. He looked at him for some time before he woke him, and thought, as an artist, what a wonderfully handsome man he was. The curls which he remembered on the night when he had crept from his bed to follow the poachers were but slightly grizzled as yet; many younger men might have exchanged locks with Tom Silcote without disadvantage. And in sleep, in quiescence, while passion was dead, the face was extremely beautiful.

So the poor fellow slept, watched by his own son; father and son alike being utterly unconscious of their relationship. Around the house, where he lay, artillery rumbled, shaking the house, and muttered away into silence eastward; squadrons of cavalry passed trampling; battalions of infantry passed with a steady, measured rustling, broken sometimes by a sharply-given word of command. The Austrian army, already beaten, was moving eastward, 200,000 strong; and there was scarcely a man among them all who had so little business there as had Colonel Silcote.

Of all the Silcotes he had wasted his life the most perversely, the most persistently. His fate should have been, by the ordinary laws of poetical justice, to die alone, unaided, uncared for, unwept. Yet his son was watching him with tenderness, and only disputing for his right to do so with the poor Princess, whom he had ruined. Is he the first instance of by far the least meritorious member of a family being the best beloved after all his misdoings?

The night was hot, and he lay with his great chest bare, heaving up and down with the regular breathing of sleep. His face was very calm, and James doubted very much if he did wisely in awakening him; but, after a time, looking at his face, he took his right arm, the unwounded one, and felt his pulse.

Colonel Silcote, without moving, quietly opened his eyes, and spoke.

"None of the whole of them left but you? They were all here just now. I was marching into Exeter, and overtook a weary girl under the hedgerows; and then I was at Dunstegan, and cut in before Tullygoram, and danced with a beautiful girl in spite of him. And the Devonshire girl and the girl of Dunstegan were one

and the same, and had the same eyes. And I awoke, and found them looking at me out of your head. Boy, I am going to die."

"Nonsense, Colonel," said James; "your pulse is quiet: you will be quite well to-morrow. You are not going to die."

"Not here. Not in this bed. No! By heavens, you are right there, old boy! But the end of it all is very near; and upon my word and honour, I cannot see very particularly why it should not be."

"You have many years of useful and honourable life before you, sir, I hope," said James.

"I don't hope anything of the kind," said Tom Silcote. "I have so many years of useless and dishonourable life behind me, that I begin to think that it will be better to close my account against the higher powers as soon as possible. If I were to mortgage my future career, with good behaviour as interest, I never could pay it. The accumulation of interest would destroy the capital in a very short time. I tell you I *can't* behave well. If I lived, which I am not going to do, I might gain in time the respectable vices of old age. But it would take so long; I am so dreadfully young. You

may depend that a fellow like me is much better out of this world than in it."

"I cannot see that, sir," said James.

"God forbid that you should. You are going to dress my arm; do so, and listen to what I say. You have a clear head and a good memory. After I am dead, I wish you to tell my father these things: I shall march to-morrow."

James promised to remember them.

"Nineteen years ago I was honourably married to a girl I met in Devonshire. The particulars of that marriage my aunt, the Princess, has in a despatch-box, which I have given into her possession.

"I have great reason to fear that my father has been sadly abused about the conduct of his late wife, poor Algy's mother. If he can get hold of the Princess, I believe that she is quite prepared to tell him everything. I fear that she and a man called Kriegsturm have used him very sadly; but he must be tender with her. He was fond of me once; and you must tell him, now that I am dead and gone, and will trouble him no more, that he must be tender with her. Out of my grave I shall insist on that. My aunt is in many

respects the best of us all. I insist that my aunt must be kindly used. Again, I am sure that Miss Raylock knows now the whole of this miserable complication from one end to the other. If she does not, Kriegsturm does. Give me my havre-sack : it is hanging on the foot of the bed."

James did so.

"This Kriegsturm is a very good fellow, but a most consumed rascal. Here are papers which commit him to the Austrian Government, for he has been Italianizing, the scoundrel, the moment he saw there was a chance of our being beaten. Put these papers in the hands of my father, and he will bring him to book with them. My father was at one time one of the first and shrewdest lawyers in England. He is a perfect match for Kriegsturm.

"You must also give my love to my father, and tell him that I am sorry to have been so bad a son to him. I would not add that I could not help it, or that he might have been a better father to me. I wish him to discover whether my wife is alive or not—his sister has the particulars of the marriage—and to pension her. I had no family by her. You are hurting me."

"I am very sorry, sir," said James; "I am but a clumsy nurse."

"I had no family by her, at least as far as I know. I should wish him to find her out and pension her, if she is alive. I behaved very ill to her, I fear. Have you done?"

"I have done now, sir," replied James. "You had better sleep."

"I have been sleeping; I cannot sleep again. I shall sleep long and soundly in a few days. Sit beside me, and talk to me."



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE ENEMY ADVANCES.

A FRENCH officer, riding up to the first of the Silcote carriages, took off his hat and bowed low.

"I really doubt if it is safe for Monsieur to advance further," he said. "Monsieur can of course please himself, but, until we have gained another victory, I would wish to point out to Monsieur that advance is, to say the least, dangerous. The enemy were here the day before yesterday. Some of them are here still."

He pointed to a few stark heaps which were lying in the summer grass, in the field to the left of the road. Silcote understood him at once.

"I thank you for your politeness, sir: we will go no further. Young ladies," he continued, "dismount, and go into that house opposite: I will be with you directly."

Miss Lee and Mrs. Thomas Silcote did so at once. Mrs. Thomas knew from old experience that she was in the presence of death, although she had not actually made out the Austrian corpses. Miss Lee saw a look in her face which made her silent, and which caused her to follow. The two women silently left the carriage, politely handed out by the French officer, and went towards the house. The French officer remained. Silcote and Arthur leaned over the side of their carriage talking to him, while Boginsky came up from the second carriage, and stood beside the French officer's horse.

"Arthur," said Silcote, "there is some Moselle somewhere, and I am thirsty ; get some. Monsieur, we are much indebted to you. I perceive that we are passing into the real regions of war. Has there been, then, an actual cataclysm?"

Boginsky and Arthur laughed at his pedantry. Seeing that Silcote laughed himself, the French officer, drinking his glass of Moselle, laughed also.

"We heard that there had been an engagement," said Silcote, "but we were not aware how near our British audacity had brought us to it. Are those blue and

white heaps, lying there on the grass, actually Austrian corpses?"

"They are such, Monsieur, a small instalment."

"What is the name of this place," asked Silcote; "and what are the details of the engagement?"

"This place is Genestrello. Beyond you see the heights and the village of Montebello. You have never heard of Montebello. No; nor did any one until yesterday. Yet Montebello will live in history beside Lodi and Arcola. We carried the heights of Montebello yesterday. It was only the first of a great series of victories. We have already demoralized the Austrians. The rest is quite easy."

"Ho!" said Silcote; "then it is all over. Arthur, give this gentleman another glass of Moselle. Can you give me any further details of this action of yesterday, my dear sir?"

"With the greatest pleasure," replied the French officer. "Here at Genestrello the Sardinian light horse, in command of Colonel Count Frangipanni, met the Austrian cavalry, under command of Colonel Silcote,—a compatriot of yours, by the way. Each regiment was beaten in turn, and the Austrian Colonel Silcote was

desperately wounded by the Sardinian Colonel Frangipanni ; after which the Austrians retreated."

"You hear all this, Arthur," said Silcote. "Can you tell me, sir, what became of Colonel Silcote?"

"He rode away after his regiment," said the French officer. "I know no more."

"Have you any other details of the engagement which you can tell me, sir?" asked Silcote.

"Well, I doubt it," said the Frenchman. "There was the Princess Castelnovo, who charged with the regiment ; and there were two young English artists, whom she took prisoner by threatening them with her revolver. Beyond that I know nothing."

"Altogether this looks very sad, Arthur," said Silcote. "But we will go on, and see the end of it."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PRINCESS'S TALISMAN.

"Is he dead?" said the Princess scornfully to James, coming up to him while he was quietly smoking in the sun in front of the Colonel's quarters at Pozzo d'Orno.

"Is who dead?" asked James, in surprise.

"Your new friend, Colonel Silcote; the man for whom I have sacrificed everything, and who has taken up with a boy like you; excluding me, and refusing to see me. Is he dead?"

"No, my lady. He is going on very well."

"He and I were both better dead. Will he see me?"

"He says he will see no one whatever."

"Except you?"

"Except me, He is a little off his head. He

wants to fight again. I have told him that he is not fit for it; but he insists."

"And swears at you? Good!"

"He swears, certainly, but not at me."

"Would he swear at me, do you think, if I saw him?" said the Princess.

"I doubt he would, my lady."

"He has been doing it already, I suppose?"

"No," said James, suddenly and promptly. "If he had done it once, I should not have allowed him to do it twice. But he has not done it once. My dear lady, he loves you as well as ever, but wants to fight again, and thinks that you would dissuade him from it. If you saw him, and did so, he would swear at you certainly. I will tell you the simple truth. He has forbidden me to let you see him."

"This is the very basest ingratitude," said the Princess.

"On the contrary," said James, "he merely fears that you will persuade him to fight no more; and that he will not have strength of purpose to resist you."

"Have you been persuading him to fight?" asked

the Princess. "No. I am a credulous and foolish woman; but I cannot believe that you, with your gentle young face, could be such a wretch, such a villain, as that. Any money which you may get by the murder of Colonel Silcote will be a lifelong misery to you."

James thought she was mad. "You have puzzled me two or three times lately, my lady, and you are puzzling me more than ever now. I have tried to dissuade the Colonel from fighting any more, and indeed have pointed out that he, as an Englishman, has no business to be fighting at all. But he is resolute. God knows I would stop him if I could."

The Princess seemed satisfied. She came and sat beside James on the bench. James put down his cigar.

"You are a young smoker," she said, "and are extravagant. That cigar is one of Tom's own regalias, and cost sixpence. I paid for that cigar, and consequently know its price."

"I thought that the smoke would annoy your ladyship; that is all," said James.

"I see," said the Princess. "Your manners are very

good. You are not one of those wretched young prigs of the present day who puff their tobacco-smoke into every lady's face as a matter of course, without any apology. But I regret to say that Tom has spoilt me in this matter. I like the smell of tobacco."

James of course took up his cigar.

"Now we shall be comfortable together," said the Princess. "You like cigars?"

"I like them very much."

"What else do you like?"

Arthur had put this question to him before; and he had answered "Several things;" but it was a very difficult question. He gave a general answer.

"I think that I like most things, my lady."

"Do you like jewels?"

"I daresay I should if I had ever seen any," said James. "But then you know I have not."

"They are very nice, these jewels," said the Princess. "Believe an old woman when she says that nothing satisfies the soul like jewels. A beautiful young man is a glorious thing: a beautiful young woman is still more glorious. But they don't last. Your beautiful young man comes in time to look out of a bow-



window in St. James's Street; and your beautiful young woman—why as for her, she may become anything which you like to put a name to. Do you understand me?"

"I thank God I don't," replied James.

"But with regard to jewels. *They* never change. Look at this sapphire. This is one of the finest sapphires in Europe. None but a Silcote would wear it on a battle-field. It is a frosted sapphire, the very rarest of jewels, scarcely ever seen. Ten thousand years ago the stone was exactly the same. Seven hundred years ago a magician in Thibet engraved these letters on it, which, as you see, let the eye through the frosted surface into the wine-dark depth of the jewel. Do you see?"

"It is wonderfully beautiful even to my eyes, madam."

"It is a talisman, in fact. The magician sold it to Genghis Khan; it descended to Kublai Khan; Kublai Khan gave it to Maffeo Polo, who gave it to his nephew Marco; Marco, on his return to Venice from Genoa, gave it to the then Dandolo, from whom it descended to the Castelnuevos. The last Castelnuevo

gave it to me, and I will give it to you—if you will let me see him.”

“I doubt I should not know what to do with it, madam,” replied James, extremely amused at finding himself named as last successor of a line which began by an Asian magician, went through Genghis Khan, Polo, Dandolo, and ended in himself. She had used the exact kind of humbug which a London-bred boy, like him, would be the first to detect and laugh at, and he did not care a bit for the jewel, though indeed it was perfectly unique.

“Will you take it?” said the Princess.

“I think not.”

“I *will* see him,” said the Princess.

“Then why did you not go in at once, half an hour ago, before you tried to bribe me? *I* have no authority to stop you; go in now. I think that you ought to do so. I certainly cannot stop you.”

“I never thought of that,” said the Princess. “How very curious. Well, here is the bracelet for you at all events. The setting is common, but it is a valuable jewel.”

“I must decline it, my lady.”

"I am glad of that," said she. "I will give you something else. Do you like rabbits?"

"Why?"

"Boys generally do, and I would have given you some. Or a toy terrier, or a set of cricketing things; or a boat; or a pair of carrier pigeons; or a set of Waverley novels; or anything which you boys like. But I am glad you did not take my jewel. I should have hated you if you had, I know. I would sooner bind myself to pay your expenses at Cambridge than part with one of my jewels. Well then, I will go in and see him, and get sworn at. Is he alone?"

"He is quite alone. I must warn you, my lady, that his temper is very awkward. But it is right that you should see him. He will be furious with me, but it is right that you should see him. Be gentle with him."

"Gentle with him, boy? That *I* should be told to be gentle with him! Will he be gentle with me; with the woman he has ruined?"

"I fear not."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE COLONEL RIDES AWAY INTO THE DARKNESS.

THE room was darkened from the blazing Italian sun, and she could scarcely see him. He was standing beside a window, the blinds of which were down, in full uniform, ready for the route, tightening some buckles of his swordbelt.

"Is that you, Sugden?" he said.

"No, it is I."

"Aunt? Why, I forbade him to let you in."

"But I came, nevertheless. Don't swear at me, Tom. I only wanted to see you again before the next battle. It was not so much to ask. Don't swear at me."

"Swear at you, Aunt?" said Colonel Silcote. "Am I a dog?"

"You do swear at me sometimes, now, you know. Let me have one more ten minutes of you. Let me kiss your curls once more. I swear that I will urge nothing. I swear that I will not urge you not to fight. Go; fight, if you will; and, if you are killed, I will abide the bitter end. Remember, Tom, that I am but a poor ruined old woman. They have all left me but you. Be kind to me for ten minutes : it is not much to ask. Only ten minutes."

She took out her little heavily jewelled watch and laid it on the table. "Only ten minutes of you," she said.

Colonel Silcote, with his sword clanking by his side, came to her and embraced her. "Aunt," he said, "I believe that you are the best woman in the whole world."

"I am only the most foolish," she said.

"I fear so also. Why could you not have given your money and your love to some one more worthy of them, instead of to such a worthless dog as your nephew Tom?"

"I don't know, I am sure. I suppose it was that I was fond of you."

She sat down, and he, taking a footstool, sat at her knees, as he had been used to do in times gone by, long ago, when his curls were purple-black, and not grizzled as now. Then his head rested itself in its old place upon her knee, and her hand found its old accustomed place among his hair.

"It is like old times, Aunt," he said.

"Like the *very* old times," she answered. "I was thinking just at that moment, whether, if my brother could see us two, the foolish outcasts of the family, he would forgive us?"

Colonel Silcote was not sentimental, at least in words, unless in the flurry and confusion succeeding a battle. He had been sentimental with James, certainly; but then James's wonderful likeness to his mother had something to do with that. Besides, he was suffering from the effects of his wounds.

"Do you know, Aunt, that the governor is on the whole a great trump? You may say what you like; I know how you have always backed me up; but, on the whole, it must be allowed that he has behaved much better to me than I have to him. I have done very badly. I don't think any one ever did

much worse. I have done everything that a fellow could probably do, I think."

"You never drank," said the Princess, weeping.

"Bless me, no more I did," said the Colonel. "I doubt there will hardly be time to develop my character in that direction. I never thought of that before. I quite forgot that I have one virtue left, until you reminded me of it."

"You were always a faithful and dutiful nephew to me," said the poor old woman.

"And showed it by ruining you, and, by your own confession, bullying you and swearing at you. Aunty, my dear old Aunty, for your own sake do face facts."

"I am always facing the most disagreeable facts," she replied. "If Kriegsthurm is not a fact, I don't know what is."

"Aunt," said Colonel Silcote, "do you want to get rid of that man?"

"No. I rather like him, to tell you the truth. But he is very expensive."

"I *cannot* make anything of you," he said, testily.

"No one ever could," she replied.

He muttered to himself, "I won't swear the very

last night, poor old girl," and then tried her on a new tack.

"Aunty, don't you think there has been a deal of confusion, botheration, plotting, and humbug in our family for a whole generation?"

"A great deal too much. But it is I who have done it all."

"With my assistance. But don't you think that it is time for all this to end?"

"Most certainly," said the Princess; "but who is to unravel this fearful story?"

"I should say, No one. What the dickens do you want to unravel it for?"

"Will you, dear Tom, allow me to explain it to you in a few words?"

"If you attempt to do anything of the kind I shall leave the room at once."

"But you believe that I am innocent as a babe unborn?"

"Certainly; but then this is more to the purpose. If any wrong has been done at your hands to my father, you ought frankly to explain it. You ought to clear up everything; never mind the consequences.



It is right and not wrong. My father has been abused among you. Is it not so? Come?"

"It is true."

"Throw yourself on his generosity. You told me just now you were innocent. I believe you, although I do not understand the business. Prove that innocence to him, and I will go bail he will forgive you everything. He forgave *me* often enough. Now do, like a good old soul, throw yourself on your brother's generosity; and let there be an end and finish of all these wretched complications—complications so interwoven that I don't believe that any one but old Raylock thoroughly knows them from beginning to end. *She* does. Heaven save any friend of mine from hearing her tell them!"

"But *your* prospects, my poor Tom?" said the Princess. "I have loved you, and striven for you through it all. I would rather have kept my jewels, if it were possible; but I want my brother's forgiveness for you, not for myself. And if we don't get his forgiveness for you, where are we? Never mind; it does not matter now that I have my fingers in your curls, and you are your old self towards me

once more: what are a few bright stones? They are all yours. I only thought of *your* prospects."

"Bend down and kiss me," said Colonel Silcote, quietly. "Aunt, I expect the route every minute. One complication will soon be removed from among the Silcotes. My prospects lie in the rice-fields towards Palestro."

Suddenly she rose up, and he rose also. And he, in a solemn humour before, got more solemn as he watched her. She began walking swiftly up and down the room, with her arms held up, clasping and unclasping her jewelled hands rapidly, the dim rays of the sinking sun reflecting themselves on the agitated crystals, so precious, and yet so worthless, as though there were lightning in the room. She made three turns, and then she spoke.

"I loved them, but I love you better. You are the last left to me after a miserable worthless life. There are sixty thousand pounds' worth of them, and I will give them all to you, here on the spot, if you will let me have that little Czech doctor back, and let him invalid you."

"Aunt, you must be quiet; death comes to all

men. Do you think that I could live in such miserable dishonour as that? Aunt, you must be quiet. Time is very short, and I expect my route every minute. Sit down."

She sat down, and began pulling off her rings. "The most of them are at Vienna," she said, "but they are all yours if you will be invalided. See here," she added, "here is the great Polo sapphire, with which I tried to bribe that boy to let me see you. It is in reality worth four thousand pounds. Take it, but be invalided."

"Aunt, dear," said Colonel Silcote, with irritation, "if you could contrive to leave off making yourself foolish, it would be so much better. Don't you see that, if I am killed, your jewels are no use to me; and, if I am not, they are of great use to you. Besides, I have to say some important things. I must go; my character would not be worth a rush, and you would alter your mind. The time is very short."

"Take this one jewel, at all events."

"What, your sapphire! Well, I will. I may be taken prisoner: who knows," he said, more cheer-

fully, "and then it would come in useful. So I will take it. It is an absolute gift, then, Aunt?"

"It is."

"Well, now, I have something more to say. Stay by me while I do a little job, and talk the while. There are scissors in my travelling-bag; cut off a large lock of your hair: we will wrap this in it, and I will hang it round my neck, and will direct it to be taken to you. A Frenchman will most likely do it, either on sentimental grounds, or in the hope of a very large reward from a real princess, not knowing that the value of the jewel, even if he undoes the little parcel, exceeds any reward you can give him fifty fold. You will see your jewel again, but it will not be yours. I destine it for some one else."

"You will come back again, and we will give a ball with the money, my dear. But if the jewel comes back alone, it shall be done with as you desire."

"Did you know that I was married?"

"Kriegsthurm told me you were; but I did not care to ask too many questions."

"I was ; and it was the worst thing I ever did. You do not seem surprised."

She was not. She would not have been surprised to hear that he had been married five or six times over, and was very nearly saying so right out, but did not. She said,—

"I think marriage is a good thing in the main. I am not surprised at your being married."

"I was married once, and only once : to a woman I would make my duchess to-morrow, were I but a duke. I left her in poverty and in obscurity. She may be dead. I have carefully banished her from my thoughts for many years, and she has as carefully refused to be banished ; and the eyes of this young artist who has been nursing me have, strangely enough, brought her before me again more prominently than ever. I have done many evil things, but what I did to her was the worst of them all. Now to business. If the jewel comes back without me, sell that jewel, find that woman, and provide for her with the money. Will you do this ? You will find the necessary papers in the despatch-box."

"I will do it, certainly. But supposing all this

misery happens, and I cannot find her, what then?"

"Give the money to this young artist. I love that fellow who has nursed me. She was the only woman who ever had the least influence over me for good. I treated her worse than any woman ever was treated; and yet, in gaming-hells and other places, that woman has often risen before me, and tried to scare me from evil."

"Have I had no good influence?" said the Princess.

"Scarcely, Aunt, scarcely. And yet—yes. At a time like this I will say yes. Come, decidedly, yes. You have loved me so truly, so persistently, so uninterestedly, that you *have* had a good influence over me. Why you have loved me so foolishly and so well, I cannot dream. Yet now I, to whom the morrow is death, can see that your persistent and disinterested love for me has done much for me. It has shown me—at least now, when it is too late—that there is a life higher than my own miserable, selfish form of life. Your standard, Aunt, has been a low and foolish one, I doubt; but how immeasurably higher it has been than mine! But men in

their pleasures are so selfish; women must share *their* pleasure, or they have none. See about this poor wife of mine, and tell her that I tried to forget her, but never could succeed; and, above all things, attend to this artist lad, James Sugden. Idiot Kriegsthurm is of opinion that my father will leave him the Silcote property, but that is bosh. Make friends with my father, and tell him it is the best thing he could possibly do. I hear a sound at the door, which you do not. Old Algy is dead, and so I shall see him before you. Tell Arthur to cure his priggishness; he did me no good by it. Marry Reginald and Anne on the first of April—for where should we all be if the propagation of fools had been stopped? There is nearly a twelvemonth before them: let them spend it in courting, and develop their folly.”

“She don’t like him,” said the Princess.

“She has not seen his idiocy near enough, that is all. She thinks she can find a greater fool than herself. Put her fairly *en visage* with him, and she will give up the business as a bad job; she is quite clever fool enough to see that she will never suit herself with so great an ass again. Time is short;

kiss me. You are still too young and handsome to kiss me before strangers. Let us part without scandal."

She kissed him, and said, "I heard nothing. Do not let us part while you are in this wild sarcastic mood."

"It has come," he said. "Now attention, Aunt; you can hear *now*."

The door was thrown open by James, who said, looking curiously at his father,

"The adjutant, sir."

The adjutant stalked in, in a long white cloak, like a ghost, clinking his spurs on the stones. "We have got the route, my colonel; towards Vinzaglio. Are you ready to march?"

"I am ready, Von Gerolstein. Was I not always ready?"

"Too ready, my colonel. But you are wounded, and we had hoped that you were invalided."

"Do the men want another to take them into action, then?"

"God forbid, colonel. They only hoped that, if things went wrong, they might creep back again to



rally round the kindest, best, and gentlest colonel they have ever had. Are you really coming with us?"

"I am coming with you," said Tom Silcote.

"Then God deliver those who fall in our way," said the adjutant. "I will then sound to mount."

"Sound to mount," said Tom Silcote. "Good-bye, Aunty. James, follow as near us as you can, and take care of my aunt. Keep three or four trees in an irregular line between you and the artillery, *always*. Keep your horses' heads *towards* the French artillery always, because there may be time to avoid a *ricochet*, and the trajectory of these new cannon of theirs is very low; and don't ride over dead bodies, or apparently dead bodies. Our fellows tell me that it is in bad taste, and dangerous. Give my love to my father, Aunty. I won't disgrace the family."

The night was dark and moonless; only a few of the files nearest the inn, on which the light shone, could be seen with any distinctness; tall, solemn, mounted figures, draped in white, getting dimmer and more ghostly as they stretched out along the road right and left. Kissing the Princess, and shaking hands with James, Silcote mounted his charger and sent the word

of command ringing clear through the night. The whole regiment began to wheel, to clash, and to swing into order; then, at another word, he rode away with his escort of sheeted ghosts, and the darkness swallowed him.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### PONTE MONTRIOLO.

"MY dearest Archy," said Miss Lee to Arthur, "how much further are we to be dragged in the rear of the conquering army?"

"Further than we want, I fear, my love. But don't object. Both the governor and my sister-in-law are bent on going on. Are you frightened?"

"No. I am not frightened with you. Still, I did not expect to be brought into the presence of death when I came, as I have been the last two days."

"I daresay not. Neither did I. It will do both of us good. We have looked on death too seldom. Mrs. Silcote does not mind it much."

"How she goes up and down amongst the dying!"

"And among the dead. I dread that she will find something—some day."

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that those white and blue heaps which we saw at Genestrello were men of Tom's regiment."

"Arthur, how horrible!"

"It is their discovery of this fact which makes them push on so fast."

"Good heavens! do they wish him dead?"

"I think not. I think they have some idea that they will find him wounded. I cannot say what they have in their heads. They are wonderfully subdued and quiet, and in continual confabulation with Boginsky. We had better walk faster, and regain the carriages."

"Let us stand aside, and see this battery pass," said Miss Lee to her lover. "How beautiful it is!"

"You admire artillery more than anything in all this brilliant hurly-burly," remarked Arthur.

"I do. There is something in the rattle and rumble of artillery which attracts me more than anything. Yet how beautiful these French have made their destructive apparatus."

"Yet military beauty is but a barbarous and unartistic style of beauty. No painter has ever succeeded

in making anything of it when close to the eye. The Chinese make their apparatus of war purposely hideous. I am not sure that their civilization is not in that respect higher than our own." And he walked dogmatising in the old style under the mulberry trees, with the French artillery passing them; and she hung on the wonderful words of wisdom which fell from his mouth, and treasured them up.

"Hark!" she cried, suddenly, burying her head in his bosom; "there it is again! That fearful shattering rattle of French musketry; and some beautiful human form ruined, maimed, or dead every three seconds. There is the artillery beginning. Arthur, take me away from all this. I cannot bear it."

"Other women do, and you must," said Arthur, quietly. "It will do you good. It will make you see what life is made of. Come, the carriages are waiting for us."

Mrs. Silcote, the Squire himself, and Boginsky, were a mile ahead. They had got the carriages drawn up on the side of the road, and were having breakfast in the first of them.

"Where are those two fools?" said Silcote, while

drinking his coffee. "Their coffee will be cold before they come."

"They dropped behind for a lovers' walk," said Mrs. Thomas. "They will be here directly."

"That wo—— that cousin of yours, Miss Lee, will spoil Arthur again. She will make him as bad as ever."

"I don't see that," said Mrs. Thomas.

"*I* do," said the Squire. "There is not a word he says but what she believes in. And at times he talks outrageous nonsense."

"For example——" said Mrs. Thomas.

"Not for example at all," said Silcote. "I am not going to give a specimen of my own son's imbecility to please you or any one. I only say that she believes in every word he says."

"But sure it is right for a wife to believe in her husband's opinion to a great extent," said Mrs. Silcote.

"If he has been among men of mark; if he has been in the world; if he has heard questions argued—she should trust him while discussing with him. But Arthur has heard little else in his life but crass common-room talk; and he generalises on all things in

heaven and earth on the shortest notice ; and this woman believes that he is a Solomon. He will be a greater prig than ever."

"You used to have such a high opinion of his judgment," said Mrs. Silcote.

"Argumentum ad hominem," growled the Squire ; "the real woman's argument. When I was fool enough to lock myself up for twenty years, I was also fool enough to believe that his folly was somewhat less than my own. What on earth is the use of quoting my own folly against myself ? The general women's argument is this : You said so once, and now you say so no longer ; therefore you are inconsistent. Therefore it does not matter what you say, it is unworthy of attention. Will you women ever get it into your heads that what *you* call inconsistency is often the highest wisdom—into *your* heads, the most inconsistent of created beings ? I say that this woman will make him, with his schoolmaster ideas, a greater prig than ever."

"Yet a woman should surely believe in her husband," said Mrs. Silcote.

"Yes, if he really knows the world and its ways, and its ways of thought. But Archy don't."

"But they will hit it off."

"Oh, they'll hit it off fast enough. She is fool enough for anything. But she will spoil him: and he has been spoilt enough already."

"You are very disagreeable this morning, my dear," said Mrs. Silcote.

"It is quite possible," said Silcote, "because I don't altogether approve of this match, after all."

"She has four thousand a year; she is beautiful; and you know you love her."

"That is perfectly true. And this is also true, that I am going to make Arthur richer than she is. If Arthur had ever done anything in the world, I could not so much care about his getting a wife who would simply flatter him. But then Arthur has done nothing. No one ever heard of him. And this woman is going to flatter him into the belief that he is the finest fellow on the face of the globe."

"What does it matter, so long as they are comfortable together?" asked Mrs. Silcote.

Boginsky the gentle interposed here, seeing that the argument was likely to get warm.

"My grandmother, the old Countess Boginsky, sur-



named the Terrible, was a very remarkable woman of German extraction, with a great knowledge of the world, and a wonderfully sharp tongue. She shut herself up for very many years in her Castle of Rabenstein, in the Teufelswald, and, like Silcote here, got herself the name in those parts as he did in England for being preternaturally disagreeable without cause, and for power of the repartee. My English is bad. Do I give offence?"

"Not a bit," said the Squire; who winced, however. "Go on."

"Madame, my grandmother," continued Boginsky in perfectly good faith, "was more *affreusement difficile*, more transcendently disagreeable, than ever was my excellent friend Silcote. Yet she was wonderfully clever. My aunt had a difficulty with her husband; indeed left him to go to my grandmother, and put her case before her. 'My dear,' said my grandmother, 'you should believe in your husband.' 'But I cannot,' said my aunt; 'he lies so.' 'My dear,' said my grandmother, 'recast his own lies for him, and tell them to him again the next day; he will then believe them to be originated by you, and you

will get on charmingly.' 'But I cannot believe in them,' said my aunt. 'Tell them a few times, and you will get over that difficulty,' said my grandmother."

"Your grandmother seems to have been a very sensible sort of person, M. Boginsky," said Silcote, quoting the words of Louis XVI. on a very sad occasion.

"This conversation seems to me to be very silly, unprofitable, and immoral," said Mrs. Silcote. "I wonder where these two geese are? I would sooner listen to the deadly old rifle music in staccato than such nonsense. Your grandmother ought to have been ashamed of herself, M. Boginsky."

"She was not one of those who fulfilled every engagement in life, as madame has done," said Boginsky; "and I very much fear that she never fulfilled the duty of being ashamed of herself. In fact, I know she did not."

"If we sit here in this burning sun, waiting for these two, we shall quarrel," said Mrs. Thomas. "Hark, they are at it again: the French are engaged. By heaven, I should know that loose, wild rattle by

now. Silcote, we cannot get the carriages forward further; come with me on foot. You are not angry with me?"

Silcote laughed good-humouredly, and they got out and started along the road at once. The battle of Palestro had begun. Boginsky looked after them for a moment; looked at the square, stalwart figure of the Squire, and at the graceful, elastic figure of Mrs. Silcote, as they walked rapidly away; and he remarked,—

"You belong to a strange nation, and you are the strangest pair of that nation I have ever seen. What on earth do you propose to yourselves: are you mad?"

He got a little canteen out of the carriage, which he slung round him. He told the courier that they were going to the extreme front on foot, and that he must do the best he could. The courier urged that the Austrians were massed on the left, and that the upshot of the day was extremely doubtful. Could not Signor Boginsky persuade monsieur and madame to stay by their carriages? In case of a failure in turning the Austrian right, monsieur and

madame would find themselves in irremediable difficulties."

Boginsky perfectly agreed with him. "We shall make a fiasco if a retreat is necessary. But they are resolute to go, and I must go with them. Tell Mr. Arthur Silcote about our having gone forward. Don't move from here until he comes up, and take your orders from him." So he ran off after the Squire and his daughter-in-law, whom he quickly overtook.

"Ha!" said the Squire, "are you coming with us? This is kind. We did not think of you."

"I do not think that you considered anything, sir, when you made this determination of going to the front alone with madame. It is a very mad resolution: cannot I persuade you from it?"

"Why is it mad? We have before us there, the one a husband, the other a son. We have talked together about him so much, that we have determined to find him, for we have both forgiven him. Is there anything mad in that?"

Boginsky thought it a rather Bedlamite whim; but he had long before been told that the Squire was

mad, and that Mrs. Thomas was odd, and so he said nothing, but walked behind them, and found that he had to walk fast too.

The Squire and his daughter-in-law were talking eagerly as they walked. There came a heavy shower without thunder, which wetted them all, and yet they walked on still, talking eagerly. Mrs. Silcote walked on the path to the right of the road, and Silcote walked on her left in the road. There came some artillery passing them at a trot, taking the right side, as they do on the Continent. The trooper on the right of the gun nearly rode over Silcote; Silcote merely put up his left shoulder and got out of the way, joining Mrs. Silcote again at once, and beginning the conversation as eagerly as ever.

Boginsky wondered what they could be talking about. He went up to caution the Squire, and overheard them.

"I am quite prepared for what you propose, my dear," said the Squire, "as I have said a dozen times before this week. If he chooses to acknowledge you, without knowing of your great inheritance, let us give him another chance. If he is not man enough

for that, you are a fool if you allow him to recognise you."

"Might I ask, sir, once more," demanded Boginsky, "what is your particular object in this very insane expedition?"

"We are going after Colonel Silcote," replied the Squire. "We have information that his regiment is in the extreme Austrian right. We wish to go towards the Austrian right."

It caused no particular astonishment to the Squire to see that Reginald was standing beside Boginsky; there was too much noise to be surprised. He, however, thought it worth while to ask Reginald whence he had come, and where was James?

"He is in the Austrian lines, with Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary. But I came away, and got here through the rice-fields. I did not care to stay with them, for they are sure to be beaten. Uncle Tom calls me a fool, and Aunt is mad."

"Monsieur also is very mad," said Boginsky. "Will monsieur be so good as to cease talking in an excited way to madame on family matters, which surely may keep until this hell has burnt itself to cinders, to

listen and to look? *That* is the Austrian right: will you go *there* after him?"

To their left was a field of blossoming maize, more than breast high, in which grew poplars, planes, mulberries, all now in full leaf,—a very little field, which dipped, not a hundred yards away, into squashy, green rice-grounds, intersected by runnels of water, through which blue-coated soldiers were trotting and splashing. Behind, a hillock and a red-roofed building. Beyond, a vast cumulus of artillery smoke, driven away from them by the wind; so great and so vast, that it competed with the real cumulus of the thunderstorm which was rapidly approaching from the south-east. Beyond this fictitious gunpowder cumulus rose a distant squarely-shaped Alp.

So much for what they saw; what they heard was still more terrible. A shattering rattle of musketry close to them, getting more furious and more prolonged as it grew more distant; beyond, the staccato of rapidly-worked artillery, shocking the ear. Boginsky was alongside of them now, and said, "*That* is the Austrian left: you will surely turn back."

But Mrs. Silcote said "No," adding, what seems

to be improbable, that she had heard heavier firing from mere field-pieces before. "Reginald," she said, "you can guide us over the ground you passed yesterday?"

Reginald demurred strongly. It was a bad road enough on horseback—utterly impassable on foot. He had great difficulty in getting through yesterday. The way lay on causeways, through rice-fields, and the waters were let out for irrigation. He almost refused.

"Are you afraid?" asked Mrs. Silcote.

"Yes," said Reginald, petulantly.

"What are we to do now, then?" asked Mrs. Thomas.

"Reginald, who could have guided us, has turned coward."

"Why, we must go on alone," replied Silcote, "and leave Reginald and Boginsky."

"I am going with you, monsieur," said Boginsky. "I think that we are behaving like mad people, but I will go with you. Come, young gentleman, think yet once again, and show us the way by which you came."

"It is not safe," said Reginald. "We shall have to go under fire."



"Don't force the boy," said Silcote, in perfect good humour. "Let us pull through it together."

"But he knows the way," said Boginsky; and added some flowers of speech in his own language, the meaning of which could only be guessed by their emphasis. "If you *will* go on this expedition," he said aside to Silcote, "I think that your only chance lies with this young gentleman. And I fancy that he *wants* bribing."

"The infernal young coward," said Silcote, "I would bribe him fast enough, but I don't know what he *wants*. I'll give him three or four hundred pounds, if that is any good."

"He would take a bribe if you knew what to give him," replied Boginsky.

"Let *me* bribe him," said Mrs. Silcote. "I will soon manage the matter for you. I will not wait for your leave. Here goes,—

"Reginald," she said, "you will just be pleased to take us to your uncle's regiment at once, and as quickly as possible. Your grandfather emphatically *orders* you to do so."

And he said not another word, but went. He had

been used all his life to being ordered, and had only just broken loose from James, the last person who had ordered him. He was not displeased to find himself ordered about again, even though the order was to go under fire. He was not physically *afraid* of going with them; he hated more the bustle and the excitement of the thing than the danger. Yet, by his ten minutes' hesitation at Palestro, he cleverly and dexterously disposed of all *his* chances of heirship which seemed so fair while his grandfather was in a sentimental mood about his wronged son Algernon.

"What a pity it is that Betts is not here; what he might do in shares, for instance, with the telegraph! A man with so much capital in hand as I have might have made a quarter of a million by the intelligence I have gained in the last ten minutes."

"I do not understand you, father," said Mrs. Silcote, as she took his hand to help her over a runnel in the rice-fields.

"I will explain," said Silcote. "That furious volcano, for which we have been pushing, has ceased its eruption—there, you have slipped your foot in, and have wetted it—you should jump further; that furious vol-

cano has ceased, and that means that the Austrian right is turned, and that they are in retreat."

Reginald and Boginsky had been going swiftly before them until now. She said quietly, "Call Reginald and Boginsby back."

Her voice reached them, and they turned to come. "Is the right really turned?" she asked Silcote.

"There is no doubt of it. Why this comparative silence, otherwise?"

"Then we shall see him. He is not one to be left behind. I shall see him, after twenty years, once more."

Reginald and Boginsky were beside them now.

"Is the Austrian right turned?" she asked. Boginsky pointed to a mass of scarlet and red on a hill, backed by the smoke of musketry fire, and said, "The luck of the Tedeschi has forsaken him. He would not be crowned, and so Hungary is avenged in bitter tears. The star of the Second of December is in the ascendant."

"I do not happen to understand your allusions," said Mrs. Silcote. "All I ask is this: Are the Austrians beaten?"

"They are most certainly beaten."

They passed on more swiftly now, for the way led out of the rice-fields, and passed round a low hill, whose few trees were ripped and broken by cannon shot. Reginald, getting excited, guided them well and swiftly. The firing was getting less furious, and more distant.

They were passing over the ground which had been crossed by the division of Cialdini only a few hours before: and were among the dead. At first the corpses lay few and far between—no wounded here, all killed by artillery at a long range: but as they went on they grew thicker and thicker. A few ambulances were standing or moving among them; and sometimes, when they were walking beside one, the shuddering defensive motion of an arm, or the ghastly stare of an agonized face, would tell them that some poor fellow had not passed the gate of death, but was too near it to care much whether he was succoured or not. This was the fair work of musketry; and soon they came on the first white uniform lying solitary among the blue around. Boginsky took off his hat respectfully.

"The foremost man, sir," he said to Silcote. "The

hero of the day. In '49 I prayed to be cold and stark like him in the post of honour. I can at the least take off my hat to him now."

Silcote only nodded at him, for a growing awe was upon him; Reginald was going so straight and so swift. Towards what?

"We are close to Ponte Montriolo, now," said Reginald, turning suddenly. "That is it among the trees."

"Why are we going there?" asked Silcote under his breath.

"They were there this morning," replied Reginald. "Aunt and James, and Uncle Tom. But they will not be there now. It is all silent."

Very nearly. There were a few live figures moving about, but there were more dead than living. A little sluggish stream, crossed by a stone bridge, against which abutted, over the stream, a low white one-storied house with a red roof: close by, among fine trees, was a mansion with a cupola which rose above them; a little further away another, very like it. In front, to the eastward, beyond the woods, the war was feverishly growling itself into a temporary silence; but here, by this little bridge, there was silence, almost peace.

"There they are," whispered Reginald.

"There are who?" replied Silcote, also in a whisper.

"Aunt and James," replied Reginald, aloud. "That is Aunt sitting down under the wall, and James is standing by her. I don't see Uncle Tom."

"Thank God," said Silcote. "He and his cavalry are far away, by now."

"Oh, I forgot to tell you," said Reginald. "His regiment was ordered to the rear, and he saw that he was too weak to ride any further, and volunteered to stay with the 11th Jägers. Did not I tell you that? No, by the way, I don't think I did."

"Stay back, all of you," said Mrs. Silcote. "The worst has happened, for I see her sitting there and rocking herself to and fro. No one has so good a right there as myself, as she, and James. Keep them back, Silcote. After so many years?——"

He had fallen quite dead, from a suddenly mortal wound, headlong on his face which was only saved from laceration on the ground by the sword-arm, held up in defiance, upon which his face had fallen. He looked as though he was asleep when they found him, and then, when James raised his heavy head upon his

knee, they thought he was alive ; for death had come so sudden and so swift that the last fierce challenge had been but half uttered, and had left its expression in his half-opened mouth ; and a dim ghost of the fury of battle was still looking at them out of his staring eyes.

It is very difficult to know what to say, and what to leave unsaid. The reader must place himself in the situation. The Princess was more experienced in one little attention, we shall all want some day, than was James. When that was done, she sat down and began rocking herself to and fro, singing.

Singing in a very low voice, sometimes in German, sometimes in Italian. Her grief was so deep that Providence in His mercy had dulled it. There was a deep, bitter gnawing at her heart, which underlay every thing else ; as the horror of his doom must make itself felt in the last quiet sleep of a criminal before his execution, let him sleep never so quietly. Yet her feeble intellect was for a time numbed, and, as James feared, mercifully crazed : it refused to acknowledge what had happened. These half-witted women can love wondrous well.

No help had come near them. James thought of his position. "The living," he thought, "are more than the dead. If I can get her away I will."

He made two or three efforts, but she only pointed to what lay beside them. The third time she answered him, "We must wait till he wakes." And then, believing that she was crazed, he said no more, and so stood against the wall, while she sat on the ground, rocking herself to and fro, singing in a low voice.

It was no surprise to James to see his mother coming swiftly towards them through the dead. He was perfectly aware of the direction in which Reginald had gone, and was sure that his mother would follow him to the very verge of safety. She had had previous experience of battle-fields: he almost expected her. But when, without noticing him, she knelt beside the dead man's side first, gazed in his face, which now, the conventionalities of death having been gone through, was dull, calm, and expressionless, when she kissed him, and smoothed his curls—my hand is too rude to go on. When he saw all this he was both surprised and frightened.

Still more so when the poor Princess roused herself



to say, "I know you, my fine madam: you are Mrs. Sugden. He belongs to me, I gave up all for him." And his mother replied, still looking on the dead man, "You were a good friend to him, and I thank you, but I gave up more to him than you did. I am his widow."

The Princess could not understand this at first, but began her low singing again. The next thing which James noticed was Silcote himself, with his great square solemn face, looking down upon his dead son.

Mrs. Silcote looked up in his face. "I won't reproach you more than I can help," she said; "but, if you had not made that concealment about my inheritance to me, this could never have happened. It would have been better that he had had it and spent it all a hundred times over, than that this should be."

Silcote bowed his head and said nothing. The next voice which was heard was that of the good Count Boginsky. "My dear friends," he said calmly, "to whom am I to address myself concerning arrangements?"

Silcote went away with him. "What would you recommend?" he asked. "This is a terrible thing for

us, my dear Count. That poor corpse which lies there was once my favourite son ; that lady kneeling by him is his wife. He had quarrelled with both of us, and we were pursuing him to force him into a reconciliation, and we find him dead and stark. Our only object was to renew our love to him, sir. He had been very extravagant, and had not treated her well, but we could have tamed him, and now he is dead. I cannot realise it. I meant to have forgiven him all for her sake, if he had only acknowledged her."

"You *have* forgiven him, have you not?" said Boginsky, who since the defeat of the Austrians was taking a higher line altogether.

"God knows I have," said Silcote. "But details. I do not know how to arrange matters. I never was at fault before, but I am infinitely shocked and distressed. It is inconceivable at present, but it will be terribly conceivable soon. *Can* you arrange?"

"As a friend. You and yours have been good friends to me. I shall be in a different position soon. Will you give me the title of friend, as an equal, and let me manage matters for you in *that* capacity? May I order as I please?"

"You may order as you please."

"Then go to that poor Princess, your own sister, and comfort her, and win her confidence. Go and do that, Silcote. She has been a misguided woman, but a loving one. Go and save her heart from breaking. Now that he lies cold and dead, she has no one left but you."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SUNT LACHRYMÆ RERUM.

AND so Boginsky went among the others, while Silcote went alone to his sister.

She still sat on the ground. The movement of the others around her, and her jealous wonder at Mrs. Silcote having taken her place solemnly and silently beside the corpse, had aroused her, and had enabled her to pass into the second stage of her grief, that of terror. She sang no more, but sat and looked around her fearfully. At this time Silcote came and bent over her. She spoke first, looking wildly up into his face.

"Any time but now, brother," she said hurriedly. "I know that I cannot die for many years. You shall reproach me for the rest of my weary life for all my

wickedness towards you, if you will only spare me now. Any time but now. There is a feeling of deep horror on me at this time, which is almost too much to bear. All this is my doing. I have no right to ask for mercy; I have ruined your life and have killed him. I do not ask you to spare me; I only ask for a little time."

"Sister," said Silcote gently.

"I do not ask to be spared, brother. I will bear any penance you may put upon me. I only ask you not to begin it just yet. I cannot repair the wrong I have done, I cannot replace the papers I stole, I cannot bring the dead to life. But I can bear my penance. I only ask you to spare me just now. I know that you are just and hard, and that you will be hard and just with me; which will be terrible. Only remember that I have not one human soul left to love me in the whole world: except perhaps Kriegsthurm."

"Mary, my dearest old girl," said the Squire.

"I beg your pardon!" said the Princess.

"My good old Mary: my dear old sister. I will love you."

The poor woman drew herself away from him.

"Don't speak like that," she said. "You had better begin on me at once than speak to me like that. Because," she added, almost quaintly, "you don't know everything yet, and so, if you forgive me now, we shall have to go through the whole business again. I wish you would leave me alone. I can bear it all if I have time. But I am frightened."

"My dear Mary," said Silcote, bending over her and kissing her, "you are mazed with this dreadful catastrophe. Can you listen to me? I will speak very slowly. I know everything, or believe I know everything, and will seek, if you wish it, to know nothing more. Everything is entirely forgiven, even if it were a hundredfold as much."

"It was Kriegsthurm," said the mazed Princess. "It was he who committed that unutterable wickedness. She was pure and good, and I was innocent of that."

"Of course you were. But listen carefully, my poor Mary. Suppose that frightful device had been yours, which I never believed, I have so entirely forgiven everything that I could take you to my bosom just the same as I do now."

She repulsed him. "Not yet," she said. "I will not kiss you till you know the whole truth. I am perfectly certain that you do not know the whole truth."

"Yes! yes! I do," remarked Silcote. "Come, Mary, don't reject me and my love after so many years' estrangement. Let there be an end of all this shameful, miserable plotting and counterplotting. We have served one another ill. You served me ill once forty years ago, and I have served you ill ever since. Let there be a finish and an end of it."

The thunderstorm which followed Palestro was on them. The lightning had struck a tree within sight, and the rain began to come down furiously. "We must move, sister," he said, and she raised herself on his arm. He took her into a little doorway in the wall of the little white house, and they sat down together on the ground side by side, as they had done often as children. In a minute or so her head lay upon her brother's breast, and she turned her eyes up into his.

"Is it really true that you are not going to be cruel to me, after all my folly?" she asked.

And he kissed her tenderly. "We will give the rest of our lives to one another, and to others. All hard words and hard thoughts must be buried in the grave which Boginsky is getting ready yonder. Let us sit here and watch the storm."

The war had roared itself into stillness, and the storm was past, leaving the Italian blue unstained overhead where they all stood, a silent party, round the grave which the hired peasants had just completed. It is by the side of the canal among the trees, in a very quiet place, quite out of sight of the village, or indeed of any building except one tall campanile, which rises from among the trees close to him, and seems to keep him company as he sleeps.

"I little thought how well I loved him," said Silcote.

"Few could help it," said James quietly. "I did so, little dreaming that he was my father."

"I little thought that you two would meet, and meet so," said Mrs. Silcote. "God has been very good to you and to him in that matter. Come, and let us leave him to his rest."

They were all dry-eyed, and only the Princess had not spoken. Seeing that she did not hear him, Silcote



took her tenderly by the arm to lead her away. She did not speak even then, only set up a low childish wail so mournful, so desolate, so unutterably sad, that the flood-gates of their grief were loosened, and they walked away together with bowed heads.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### SILCOTES.

THE oaks at Silcotes grew from gold to green, then grew golden once more, and then settled down into the full green of summer; yet stillness, or nearly stillness, reigned over hall and park, garden and forest. The perfectly-ordered machine, so long wound up, went on just the same, the least noticeable fact about it being the absence of its master.

The neighbours got excited and curious about the house, the more so as week after week went on. They met the horses exercising regularly, and the men looked much as usual. The deep wailing bay of the bloodhounds was still heard by the frightened children, whose mothers told them that the Dark Squire was away to the war—a piece of information which made him seem in their eyes more

weird and more dark than before. Everything, said the gossips, was going on just as usual at Silcotes, save that some most astounding family discoveries had been made, and, without doubt, Silcote was following the track of the Italian army.

People who had not called for years came and called now, out of sheer honest curiosity, a curiosity which was doomed to continual disappointment. Everything was unchanged. The lodge gates were opened with the greatest alacrity; lawn and drive were well kept; the flower-beds were blazing out as heretofore, and the gardeners were busy among the new French roses; the door was opened to the visitor by the butler and two men in livery, but "Mr. Silcote was in Italy, and was not expected home at present." That was all that could be learnt.

Lord Hainault of course heard of all these things, and, with his worthy wife, wondered very much at them. He had seen but little of Silcote in his life, and what little he had seen he had not liked. He seldom had any personal correspondence with him, but he had taken it into his head that a common should be inclosed: it was impossible that it could be

done without stroking the Squire the right way, and so the Squire suddenly became a most important person. Lord Hainault began at breakfast-time by laying down the proposition that country gossip was just as bad as town gossip, and that he did not believe one-half of what was said about any one. He instanced Silcote, and so persistently argued from that example, that he triumphantly proved to himself and his hearers, by lunch time, that Silcote was in all human probability rather a good fellow than otherwise. At all events he, with his wife's entire concurrence, ordered his horse, and rode gently over through the wood to leave his card on Silcote, and to get his address.

"It is an uncommon nice place, this," he said to himself, as he came out of the forest into the glades of the park, and saw the way in which artificial order was growing out of nature. "A monstrous nice place; one of the best places in the whole county. What a sad pity it is that a clever man and a gentleman, as he *is*, should not be more civilized. The best landlord and the best farmer for miles, too. I *will* see more of him when he comes back; I feel certain that he is a good fellow."

And then he uneasily remembered the general and off-hand accounts of Silcote which he had been accustomed to give, and pricked his horse into a trot, and so came round the corner of the drive on an exceedingly fine groom, whose master was close before him. Lord Hainault passed the groom, and rode up beside the master, a withered, handsome old gentleman, on a valuable cob.

"My dear Sir Godfrey Mallory!" said Lord Hainault. "You are riding far from home."

"I am only from Shiplake. I cannot ride far now. But I have a letter from Italy which tells me that Silcote is dead; and I, quite unconsciously, years ago did him a wrong, and I wish to find out whether there is time to explain my share in it in this world. I fear that Silcote has been sadly abused in his lifetime. He was not a bad fellow when I knew him, but jealous and ill-tempered. I wish I could have a talk with him. I have reason to believe that he has owed me a grudge about a very unhappy business, in which I was innocent. I am not long for this world, and I cannot bear to leave a grudge behind."

"It is like your good-heartedness, Sir Godfrey," said Lord Hainault.

"You mean my good nature," said Sir Godfrey. "We selfish men of pleasure are generally good-natured. I should say that I have been the most good-natured and the most worthless man on the face of the earth. I can really *feel* nothing—not even this."

"Not even what?"

"Do you not see the house is shut up, and that I am too late with my explanations?"

The house was shut up in reality, and the two rode forward in silence.

"Is your master dead?" said Lord Hainault to the butler, taking the bull by the horns.

"My master is alive, my lord," said the butler; "but we are in sad trouble; sad trouble indeed, my lord."

Sir Godfrey Mallory left his card and rode away waving his hand to Lord Hainault.

"What has happened?" asked Lord Hainault.

"The young master is dead, my lord."

"Which young master?"

"Mr. Thomas, my lord."

"I thought he had been dead long ago," said Lord Hainault. "I want Mr. Silcote's direction."

."Master is expected home at once, my lord," said the butler; and so Lord Hainault rode away also, saying to himself as he went, "Well, that scamp is well out of the way. Better the schoolboy than him.'" And that was all which the county represented by Lord Hainault had to say about Colonel Silcote.

One part of the great Silcote machine which was still in perfect order was the kitchen. Experts generally find that they make their very best efforts after a rest. The Silcotes cook, not condescending to cook for servants, had had an idle time of it for two months, and had taken to fishing at Wargrave. But when Mr. Betts, the senior Mr. Sugden, Miss Dora Silcote, and the children arrived suddenly at the hall, he put aside his fishing-rods, and did his best. Betts knew what good eating and drinking was, and was an old acquaintance of the cooks. Knowing he had some one to appreciate him he put his soul into the work, and Mr. Sugden and Mr. Betts sat down to a very good dinner indeed.

Not that Mr. Betts had the slightest business to

take possession of Silcotes. Sugden was staying with him at St. Mary's when they got the news of Tom Silcote's death. There was not the slightest reason for Betts moving; but he claimed great credit for taking active possession of Silcotes. As he put it to the Squire, "The moment I heard of it I came off. I did not let the grass grow under my feet, sir; I came off at once." Silcote himself was half-persuaded that Betts had done him a personal service by "coming off" so promptly, though he failed to perceive entirely why Betts should take that particular occasion to kill his bucks and tap his Madeira. But Betts did both these things, and perfectly persuaded himself the while that he was piling obligations on the Squire's head, which a life-time of devotion on the Squire's part could never repay.

"So you did not see your way to the Italian campaign, Mr. Sugden?" said Betts after the soup.

"Why, no," said Sugden. "I got so heavily used in the Crimea, that after a feeble attempt I gave it up."

"A wise resolution, nephew."



"Nephew?" said Sugden, raising his great patient handsome face to Mr. Betts.

"Certainly," said Mr. Betts, promptly. "Your sister married the late lamented Mr. Thomas Silcote. My daughter married his half-brother, Mr. Algernon Silcote. Consequently I am your uncle. Don't you see?"

"I daresay I shall in time," said Sugden. "Am I to call you Uncle Betts, then?"

"My dear sir, that is entirely a matter of detail: a matter entirely between man and man. I would not for an instant urge a man in your position to give such a title to a man in my position. Still, there are rules about these things, I believe, and it would be flattering to me."

"I will call you Uncle Betts with the greatest pleasure," said Sugden, "if you like it."

"My dear sir, not for a moment. Between men of the world, like you and me, such distinctions are invidious. If you could possibly induce Mrs. Silcote, your sister, to greet me with the title of uncle, I should have nothing left to desire in this world."

"Oh! she would never do that," said Sugden. "She is very proud."

"You are quite sure that she would not?" said Betts. "Then let us say no more about it. She is the leading member of the family which I have entered, and her wishes must be studied. It would have been gratifying to my feelings, but let it go. I and you have other claims on Silcote besides those of mere recognition. The instant that you and I heard of this lamentable misfortune we came off promptly and rallied round him. That is a service which he is not likely to forget. Silcote is not ungrateful."

"I think myself," said Sugden, painfully and with difficulty, but with honesty also, just like the mere agricultural labourer which he was, "that we had better not have come at all. There is death in the house—the death of my sister's husband, which is bad enough; and also, from what I have gathered, disaster worse than death. It seems to me ill that we should be feasting here in the house of mourning. I am sorry that I came."

"There should always be a gentleman in the house at such times as these, my dear sir," said Betts.

Sugden wondered which of the two was the gentle-

man, and concluded. in his agricultural mind, neither; but he said—

“We will not discuss that matter. Tell me about Anne Silcote. Is the business so bad as I have guessed?”

“It is as bad as bad can be, and there is the whole truth, Sugden,” said Betts, thumping his fist on the table. “There are no servants in the hall, and Dora has not appeared; so I can tell you the truth in a few minutes. I am a vulgar man, and a cunning man, and a man who will only cease to scheme for money when I am nailed in my coffin. But I am not an ungrateful man. I am not the mere snob which you would judge me to be from my manners. Algernon Silcote took me in when I was a bankrupt beggar, and showed me the beauty of a morality more noble than my own. The Squire heaped favours after favours on my head, and put me in the way of having cash again in hand to turn over. I have turned that money over. If there is a man in England who understands the handling of money it is myself. I am rich again, richer than you dream of. I only stay at St. Mary’s because I think my

benefactor Silcote would like it. Yet I tell you, Sugden, that I would have gone into the Bankruptcy Court again to-morrow, have given up every pound which I owned, if I could have prevented this last terrible scandal."

"What is it then?" said Sugden. "Here are the servants. Will you put those dishes down, and go away, if you please. Mr. Betts and I are talking business."

When they were gone Sugden resumed: "You seem to me to be two people, Betts," he said; "just now you seemed to me to be scheming about an utterly ignoble matter; and then immediately after you came out most nobly."

"I *am* two people," said Betts. "I was bred a share and stockjobber, and shall die one, and at times I try to be a Christian and a gentleman, like Algy Silcote, my son-in-law. Think it out for yourself."

"Well, I will. But about Anne. Is there anything like dishonour?"

"Utter dishonour, I fear, and utter ruin. She has gone off with a low Italian nobleman. A young Roman. Let us say no more about it."

"How did you hear it?"

"From a friend of mine, Kriegsthum. He is a great liar, but he dare not lie to me. He has made the Continent too hot for him generally, by universal political rascality, and must get back to England. He would not dare to lie to me. He has feathered his nest here pretty well, for I made four thousand pounds over his last telegram from Vercelli, in which he told me that the Austrian right was fairly turned, and that the Austrian army would not face the French rifled ordnance. I am afraid that the poor girl is lost."

"I am deeply sorry for this," said Sugden.

"So am I," said Betts.

"You say he is a noble Roman?" said Sugden.

"And a great scoundrel," said Betts. "Why, he is an *employé* of Kriegsthum's."

"When Italy is free," said Sugden, "he might make a good match for her."

"You have a good imagination," said Betts, "but he is a great scoundrel. Here is Dora."

Here was Dora. "Well, you two people," she said, "what treason have you been talking that you should

have banished the servants? If you have done talking treason, I should suggest that they were recalled. If we *are* to take possession of grandpa's house without the slightest reason, I think we might make use of his servants."

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE LAST RAMBLE.

"WELL," said Dora to Mr. Sugden, "and so they are actually due. It seems incredible."

"The Squire has telegraphed from London, and will be here in half an hour. So we shall see them all soon now."

"Not *all*," said Dora.

"All, with the exception of Anne and Reginald," said Sugden.

"And my father and Uncle Tom," added Dora.

"They are at peace," said Mr. Sugden; "they won't hurt. I wish that Anne was as well off as they."

"Do you believe this about Anne?" said Dora.

"Of course I do."

"I don't," said Dora, emphatically; "not one single word of it."

"You cannot quite help it, I fear," said he.

"I can help it perfectly well," said Dora. "The whole story is a very clumsy falsehood. I tell you that it is the very last thing which Anne would do. And I know something which I could tell you, if I chose; but I don't choose—yes, I do—no, I don't. Look at me, and I shall make up my mind."

Sugden turned his handsome brown face, as calm as a Memnon, as gentle and simple as a child, on hers. She looked at it for a moment, and made up her mind.

"Yes, I *do* choose. I can tell you what I never could tell Grandpa Betts. *You* are a gentleman, and he, though the best of men, is not. See here: Anne has done something very foolish indeed, I do not doubt; but it has been all done for spite, and nothing more."

"Spite against whom?"

"Against James, and against me," she said. "You see," she added, blushing, laughing, and gently taking his arm, "I have monopolized James, and she wanted to monopolize him herself. She has done something very violent and foolish in her anger, for she has a sad temper, but nothing in the least degree wrong."



"But Reginald?"

"Reginald and she have quarrelled for the last time, that is all," said Dora. "They never did anything else. They never would have got on together."

"You give me some hope and comfort, my love," said Sugden. "I cannot help believing you while I hear your voice ; but my reason is against you."

"Oh, indeed. Where did we get this report?"

"From Mr. Kriegsthurm."

"*Mr. Kriegsthurm*: a pretty authority! And one would be glad to hear Miss Heathton's account of the matter. Has she run away too?"

"That is a shrewd remark," said Sugden.

"Now, I am going to ask you a favour. Let us get the dogs, and go round the old place for the last time."

"Why for the last time?" said Sugden, when they had called the bloodhounds together, and started down the drive towards the forest.

"You only half quote what I said, and alter my emphasis. I *said* over the *old* place for the last time. The *old* place is no more. In less than an hour there will be a new Silcotes."

"It is true, and a more happy one," said Sugden.

"Well," said Dora, "I don't know; I actually *do not* know. I remember once that Miss Lee read us that fairy story, I forget which (it is often enough quoted), which ends, 'And so they all lived happy ever afterwards;' and Anne remarked emphatically, 'Dear me, how exceedingly tiresome they must have found it, after such a delightful series of accidents and quarrels.' Do you know that I have been happier in this old house than ever I expected to be again? There, what do you think of that, for instance?"

"There is some reason in it, or you would not have said it, my dear," replied Sugden. "Why do you think so?"

"Well, Uncle Sugden (I am not quite sure yet whether you are my uncle or my aunt—*n'importe*; Grandpa Silcote is the fountain of honour, and must settle the titles of the new court), I will tell *you* why. My dear, in old times this house was a very charming one. There was a perfectly delicious *abandon* about it, the like of which I have never seen, or even heard of, elsewhere. Coming as I did from the squalor of my father's house, this was a fairy palace for me. True, there was an ogre; my grandfather Silcote was the

ogre ; but then I liked ogres. There was a somewhat cracked princess—a real Italian princess—in velvet and jewels ; and I like people of that kind. Then there was a dark story, which we never could understand, which was to us infinitely charming ; there was almost barbarous profusion and ostentation, which *everybody*—I don't care—*everybody* loves in their heart of hearts ; there were these bloodhounds, which I hated at first, as a cockney, but which I have got to love as the last remnants of the *ancien régime* ; there were horses, grooms, carriages, ponies, deer, as indeed there are now, with all their charm gone ; and lastly, one could do exactly as one liked : one could revel in all this luxury and beauty, set here like a splendid jewel among the surrounding forest, without a soul to control one. And this was very charming, for *I* am a Radical.”

“It was an evil and perverse state of things, my love,” said Sugden.

“I dare say,” said Dora ; “but then I am evil and perverse, and I loved it. I used to protest against it ; that was my prudishness. But now that it has all passed away, I know that I loved it.”

"You are quite sure, then, that the old state of things *has* passed away," said Sugden.

"My good—distant relation (I will not commit myself)—do you know that you are perfectly foolish at times? Is not my Uncle Arthur going to marry my old governess, Miss Lee? Are they not going to take up their abode here at Silcotes? You have heard of this arrangement, because I have heard you speak of it."

"Then you think," said Sugden, "that Mr. Arthur and his bride will be inclined to look round and put things square."

Dora only looked at him at first. Her opinion was so strong as to the way in which these two would "put things square," that she did not trust herself to speak of it at present. She as good as passed the question for a time.

"There is a chance that your sister, my aunt Mrs. Thomas Silcote, or, to be more correct, *Mrs.* Silcote, may be able to do battle with them single-handed. She is in high favour at head-quarters now, and is likely to remain so. She is an energetic and courageous woman, and it seems has great influence over grandpa.

But she is one, and they are two, and she will have her work cut out for her. She will fight like a dragon for James, but James will be of no assistance to her at all. The Arthur Silcotes will beat her if she don't mind. However, we shall have a happy little household."

"My dear Dora," said Sugden, "you are very worldly."

"I am; I have seen the consequences of not being worldly, and, Uncle Sugden, I was trained in a hard school. I only know this, that I shall make James stick to his art, and be independent, for with this wonderful new happy family arrangement, I see nothing to prevent his being cut out of his grandfather's will to-morrow."

"He will have his mother's money—four thousand a year."

"I know that. But it is an evil thing for a man to wait for his mother's money. He shall be independent of that before his mother dies, if I know my own will."

"You are taking a black view of things."

"I have been used to the darker side of things. I will be more cheerful directly. Let us see what has become of our old Silcotes, in this newer and happier

*régime*. The delightful old *abandon* of the house is gone for ever. Grandpa, our ogre, has forgotten his ways. Altogether, the old house will never be what it was before. I know that the new order will be better than the old, but I am wicked and perverse, and I hate it."

"You have *talked* yourself into hating it, Dora," said Sugden, "with what seems to me a great deal of common sense."

"Well, I do hate it at all events," said Dora. "They will spoil James himself among them."

They had come in their walk before the silent cottage, in which Sugden and his sister had lived for so many years. The fence was broken, and the bloodhounds which accompanied them had invaded the garden. The flowers, mostly spring flowers which Sugden had planted so many years ago, were all out of flower, and lying withered on the neglected ground, with the exception of two groups of noble white lilies, which stood on each side of the door, and a rose which they now choose to call the "John Hopper," but which old-fashioned folks call the "Cabbage."

"Get me a lily," said Dora.

"I think that I will get you a rose instead," said Sugden. "Old maids wear lilies."

So they turned into the main avenue again, with the stupid bloodhounds round them, snuffing and scratching among the rabbit burrows.

"Little woman," said Sugden, "you have a melancholy sort of mind."

"It is likely enough," said Dora; "I watched my father's life, and saw him die. It is likely enough that my mind is a melancholy one."

"You have made *me* melancholy enough; and I looked for such pleasure from to-day's meeting. When your aunt and I lived alone and unnoticed at that cottage we have just left, we were happy enough. We never had as much to eat as we could have eaten, and we felt the want of firing also—bitterly, I can tell you. We had our great sorrow—the desertion of her, unrecognised by the poor fellow who is just gone; we had to stand all weathers, and never had five shillings in the house; yet we bore it all cheerfully. Just now, when I believed that all things were changed for the better, and we were going to begin a time of prosperity, you point out to me a hundred new miseries, fifty times worse

than the old ones. I doubt you are a killjoy, Miss Dora."

"Well," said Dora, "it does not much matter. I shall die an old maid. I always intended to be so, and I mean to be so: and I am a very deter—— Why, bless me, it *is* you."

"That looks very like old maidenhood," said Sugden, as he saw her fairly in the arms of a tall and very handsome young man, with a dark downy moustache, and—I must write it down—getting kissed. "That looks uncommonly like dying an old maid. Bah! you're just like the rest of your precious family—saying one thing and doing another. My boy James shall hear of this. I had better make myself scarce, for this is getting too tender for me—this is. Why, that can't be the boy himself? He never had moustaches. I am blessed if I don't believe it is, though. Here, you two people, manners! manners!"

"Who cares about manners before *you*?" said James, and Sugden saw that it *was* James at once.

"I thought old maids were particular in that respect," replied Sugden. "However, have it your own way, and don't regard me."



"If you don't hold your tongue," I'll kiss you," said Dora.

"Then here goes," said Sugden. "Arthur is going——" but she executed her terrible threat, and silenced him. "For," as she said, "no one ever cared one half-penny for *you*. You are of as much importance as an old milestone."

When James had got hold of one of his arms, and Dora of another—when they both clung round him and looked into his gentle, almost stupid face, Sugden thought that to be a milestone was not such a bad thing after all, if one had two such beautiful young climbers to twine around you.

"They will be here directly," said James. "I came across the fields from Twyford and have beaten them, but they will be here directly."

"Shall we wait for them here, or go back to the hall?" said Dora.

"Let us hurry back to the hall," said James. "He would like it better."

"Is he in one of his tempers, then?" asked Dora.

"No, he has no tempers now. But I think he would like it. And Aunt Mary is mad."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE RETURN.

THEY hurried back, and got under the shelter of the great porch, ready to receive the comers from the war, and to see the end of the ancient and the beginning of the modern history of the Silcote family.

"The girl is right," thought Sugden; "the new misery is greater than the old. Well, here they come."

Two carriages came grinding through the gravel up to the porch—the first closed, the second open. The closed carriage stopped first at their feet, and the butler opened the door of it. Silcote himself got out of it first, looking very quiet and very solemn indeed, taking notice of no one: and then turned round to hand out his companion, the poor Princess of Castelnuovo.

She put her well-formed hand on his arm, and, with

her finely-formed little foot carefully pointed, alit gently and dexterously on the lowest step before the porch. Then she turned to Silcote, smiled pleasantly and bowed. After this, she stood in the full blaze of the sunshine, and looked around her. She was beautifully and carefully dressed, and almost hung with jewels, all put on in the most perfect taste. Her beauty, old as she was, was still splendid: and yet, when Dora had looked on her for less than half a minute, she slipped quietly away and hid herself in one of the window-seats, saying to herself,—“She had better have died. It would be better for her if she was dead.”

For that had happened to this poor Princess which is more inexplicable, and infinitely more awful, than death itself. She was mad. She had overstepped Kriegsturm's line at last. Mystery greater than death! The old familiar world, the old familiar house, the people with whom she had lived for so many years, were all around her, and yet she was utterly unable to recognise them. She *saw* them as she had seen them a hundred times before; yet they were other places and other people to her. It is beyond all thought and all knowledge. Better perhaps not to think of this awful

death in life, or double life, but go with the doctors, who name it as "tubercular disease of the brain," and then put it on one side ; which is possibly the best thing to do.

In the sun, before the door, stood a handsome, well-dressed woman, before the eyes of men calm, polite, *bien mise*, everything which was to be desired. And yet there was no woman there at all, for the soul had gone out of her, and she saw things which were not. Her intelligence lied to her eyes, and her eyes to her intelligence. This mystery of madness is surely the greatest mystery of all. See it in one you have loved, and then contradict me.

She did not know her own brother, and she did not know the old house ; still she knew that she was mad. She believed that her brother was the doctor, and that this was the asylum. Yet by some infinitely deep cross-purpose in her soul she struggled towards the surface of reason for an instant. She turned to the butler, and said, "Colonel Silcote has missed the train, and will not be in time for dinner. He will have his old room in the west wing."

And then she passed under the shadow of the

porch and into the old hall, where the bloodhounds lay about; and Dora, looking from her dim window-seat, saw her stalk along, imperial, majestic, with her face set, with uneasy lips, with eyebrows drawn together, and with staring eyes, which saw what was not there.

But by this time the second carriage had unloaded itself.

The meeting between Miss Lee and Dora had something of humour in it. Dora had never thoroughly *liked* Miss Lee, and had seen and remembered a very great many indiscretions which Miss Lee, under present circumstances, would have liked her to forget. Yet Dora had not forgotten them, and Miss Lee knew it. They were, therefore, both on their dignity. When the poor Princess and her brother had passed her in the hall, she came out in the porch, and met her old friend-enemy, Miss Lee, face to face.

Miss Lee was dressed up to the point which is expected of every lady with four thousand a year; and Dora, having been dependent on Mr. Betts, by no means a liberal outgiver, was somewhat dowdy and shabby. Yet Dora held the key of the position

in her pocket, and knew it, as did likewise Miss Lee herself.

"How do you do, my dear Dora?" said Miss Lee.

"How do you do, Miss Lee?" said Dora, looking very calmly at her.

"I am very well, indeed, my dear Dora," said Miss Lee.

"I am exceedingly glad to hear it," said Dora. "I am afraid that your nerves must have been shaken by the war."

"Not at all," said Miss Lee. And then there was a pause. Dora would have died sooner than have spoken next, and, to tell the truth, not only Miss Raylock, but Arthur himself, remained perfectly silent; "for," as Miss Raylock expressed it, "Miss Lee had been giving herself airs."

Miss Lee had to speak first, accordingly. "My dear," she said, "will you give me a kiss?"

"With the greatest pleasure," replied Dora.

"I hope we shall be very great friends, Dora."

"I am sure I hope we shall," was the reply.

## CONCLUSION.

So comes one long story to an end. Nothing remains but to give the various characters their departure, and to finish one of the most difficult efforts of story-telling ever attempted.

I hear people asking about such and such a story, "Does it end well?" as if that mattered. How can a story of deceit, folly, and selfishness like this *end* entirely well? It ends as well as it can. As people make their beds, so they must lie on them.

Silcote by degrees became possessed of all the circumstances with which our reader is already acquainted, with regard to his relations with his wife, which were chiefly brought about through the foolishness of his poor sister. Kriegsthurm, having been forced back to England, in consequence of the danger incurred from the continental democrats, took a house in Cam-

den Town, and, being rather short of cash, wrote to Silcote, offering to tell him the whole truth, from beginning to end. Silcote went to him at once, and learnt from him and his head-agent in the villainy, all the details. He paid him his money, asking him if he did not think himself the greatest scoundrel in Europe? To which Kriegsturm answered, "No, not by many degrees;" and laughed.

Silcote was now aware that he had by his insane jealousy and reticence caused the death of a good and gentle woman, and of an innocent and tender wife. He spoke to Mrs. Tom Silcote in strong language of the never-dying remorse which such a discovery would entail; yet that remorse was very little visible after all, from a variety of reasons.

If he had been still alone, still isolated from human sympathies, no doubt that remorse would have been very great—nay, it was relatively very great. He would probably have maddened himself into some new phase of folly with it. But many circumstances prevented his doing this, which it would be well to consider.

The business was so very, very old. Above forty



years old. Very few men are capable of feeling acute *remorse* for actions done so long ago, although they may use excited language about them, as did Silcote. To feel remorse acutely, the image of the victim or the sin must be close to the mind's eye; at least, closer than a space of from forty to fifty years. He still had a great tenderness for his poor wife, but he was getting old: it was very long ago; and his love for her had been turned into furious and as he thought, righteous indignation against her for so many years, that he was unable to obliterate the half century during which he had regarded her as a monster of wickedness, and take up his love for her again as fresh as ever. He was unable to carry out the ideal programme which he had announced to Mrs. Thomas. He was regretful and repentant. But of practical acute *remorse*, with its usual symptoms, there was none.

There were other reasons against this phase of mind: almost innumerable. The break in his habits, when he had left his unnatural solitude to go into the very thickest of the first of these newly-invented, sudden, bloody, and decisive wars, had somewhat dazed him,

and put old matters very far away indeed. He had, again, been very fond of his son Thomas, and had always, in his heart of hearts, thought of a reconciliation between them as a matter of course. He had pursued him under fire with the intention of being reconciled to him, and had found him lying stark, stiff, and stone-dead under the poplars by the mill wall at Montriolo, watched by his half-crazed aunt and his unacknowledged son. This alone was enough to put old disasters out of his mind.

Then, again, Anne. He had been very fond of Anne; and had, in his newly-awakened recklessness, sent her abroad with a somewhat foolish governess. In despite of Dora's purely imaginary defence of her (which did Dora great credit), Anne had made an awful *fiasco*. She had turned Roman Catholic in order to be married to the young Roman gentleman whom Kriegsturm, in one of his puzzled fits, had set on to watch James, and was figuring away at Naples with him, with the money which had been entrusted to Miss Heathton, her governess, for their mutual subsistence. Reginald and she had had an interview, previous to her escapade, in which she told

Reginald that she had never cared for him in the least, but was in love with James, and always had been. After which she went to Naples, as we have seen; and Reginald having no one to direct him, went to Innspruck,—why or wherefore we shall never know,—and wrote to his grandfather from that place, telling him that he had carefully examined the various relations in which he stood to his fellow-men, that he had arranged to commit suicide, and that by the time these lines reached him (the distracted Squire), he, Reginald, should be no more.

He did not do anything of the kind, but exhibited a feeble, pretty picture at the Dudley last year. Still Silcote, having believed in his own nonsense for so many years, was able to believe in Reginald's. This, however, was one of the smallest of his troubles. Any one, no matter how sensitive, would have forgotten an old trouble, on the basis of which this story has been written, in the face of the new troubles which arose and confronted him on every side.

It is extremely disagreeable to me to allude to such a half-reputable *flasco* as that of Anne. I do not deal in such wares; you must go elsewhere for them; but

it is still more disagreeable for me, a man whose principal desire is to please, to allude to the relations between Mrs. Thomas Silcote (Mrs. Sugden) and Mrs. Arthur Silcote (Miss Lee).

As long as they were mere cousins and co-heiresses they got on capitally together. They were both extremely High Church, took in the same paper, and understood one another perfectly. Nothing could be more perfect than their *accord*.

Then came in Arthur: of the liberal Oxford minority, who had, to tell the plain truth, pitched Miss Lee overboard, until she got her fortune. Miss Lee was very rapidly converted into *his* views, as Dora had often prophesied. But, then, Mrs. Tom Silcote stuck to her High Churchism in the most strenuous manner. There never was such a difference in this world. It was two to one against Mrs. Thomas, for Miss Lee had gone over to the enemy. Everything which Arthur said she swore to. It was no use for Mrs. Thomas to "taunt" her with previously-expressed opinions. Mrs. Arthur replied merely that she knew better now.

And, again, there was something between these

ladies which was possibly more important than any merely religious difference. It was the question of the succession to Silcote's enormous wealth. Arthur, as an independent bachelor, was one person: Arthur married, with his announcement out to the whole county of a probable heir, was quite another person. While a bachelor, in precarious health, he could well afford to pooh-pooh his father's intention of making him heir: he spoke sincerely when he rudely declined the honour. But, now, with a showy and beautiful wife, of whom he was proud, and who took him into society, things were very different. He began to feel the value of the prestige which a beautiful and rich wife gives a man, and to be less and less patient of the idea of living principally on her money. And Silcotes was one of the finest places in the county, and she was naturally mistress of it—would certainly be, according to his father's present will, could he only undermine Mrs. Thomas's enormous influence with his father, which was now greater than his own.

As for Mrs. Thomas, she was perfectly determined that James should marry Dora, and that the Thomas Silcote and the Algernon Silcote interests should

coincide, and bring James in triumphantly as master of Silcotes. To further this object she persistently kept the Squire's old grievances before him. She continually, though with the finest tact, urged the claims of Dora, the child of his ill-used son Algernon, upon him, and gently and calmly laid the death of Thomas Silcote at his doorstep, as she had done in sober earnest at the battle of Palestro. Her case was a very strong one, and she was quite a match for Arthur.

Now, seeing that these people all lived in the same house together for over a year at the Squire's expense, that they were all of them very resolute people, and that they were always, night or day, ready for one another, it is no wonder that at the end of a twelve-month the Squire had so far forgotten his old life in this new one as to consult Betts about the best route to Australia, affirming positively that he could stand it no longer, and should emigrate.

"What part of Australia do you want to go to?" asked Betts.

"Don't know," said Silcote. "I only want to get out of this."

"If you can't tell me where you want to go, I can't give you the route," said Betts. "But drop allegory; you want to get out of all this, and I don't wonder. Which party do you wish hoisted out? There!"

Silcote could be downright as well as Betts. "Arthur and his wife," he replied.

Betts whistled. "You are a bold man, Squire. There is life in the old hound yet. Why?"

"Because I cannot do without Mrs. Tom. I want to end my life with her. And I don't like Arthur and his wife; they are far too fine for me. They are beginning to give dinner parties here now, and show me off like a bear which *they* have tamed, and I am etcetera'd if I stand it. Tom's wife is worth fifty of them."

"Who is to have Silcotes?" asked Betts.

Silcote replied, "That is a home question."

"So it is," said Betts. "I can't help you until it is answered, though."

"Well then, James and Dora," said Silcote; "and that is what makes the business so intolerable. I will provide for Arthur splendidly—at once if he

wishes it; but Tom's son and Algernon's daughter shall have Silcotes. You may call me a fool if you like, but so it will be."

"I don't call you a fool," said Betts; "I think you are doing wisely and well."

"But how am I to get rid of Arthur?"

"Why—let me see; he is out shooting now; wait till he comes home, and tell him of the determination you have come to."

"I dare not," said the Squire.

"*You must*," said Betts. "*You shall*. If *you* don't, I will; and so I do not deceive you."

"But how?" said Silcote.

"Announce to him the immediate marriage of James and Dora," replied πολυμήτις Betts; "then explain this matter to him, and immediately afterwards have those two married, just to show you are in earnest."

"They are full young," said the Squire.

"None too young, and they have plenty of money. Lor' bless you! carpenters and blacksmiths, and such people, habitually marry at that age without a week's wages to the good. You can knock 'em up a couple



of thousand a year amongst you. Let 'em marry at once. Put your hand to the prettiest thing ever done. Let us see one more beautiful thing before we die, Silcote. We have seen but few pretty things in our lifetime: let us see one more before we take to the chimney corner on our way to the churchyard. Come, my good old friend, put a rose in your button-hole, and let us have this wedding. Youth is past for ever with both of us, but let us feel young once more, vicariously. Let this thing be."

"But Arthur?"

"Hang Arthur. Why, you are worth six of Arthur any day of the week. You have sufficient manhood to make a fool of yourself, and I'll be hanged if he has. Algy was worth a dozen of him, and so was Tom. There he is, coming in from shooting. Go down to him. Tell him of your intentions and announce the marriage."

"But we have not consulted James and Dora," said the Squire.

"Pish!" said Betts, "go. Don't be a coward."

Arthur, on being informed that his father had been long thinking of his domestic arrangements, and after

that long thinking had come to the conclusion that the best thing he could do was to make over to Arthur 118,000*l.* in the funds, and leave the reversion of Silcotes to his grandson James, was furiously, though silently indignant. No one could possibly have behaved more perfectly than Arthur under this heavy dispensation of Providence of nearly 4,000*l.* a year down on the nail. The attitude of himself and his wife at dinner that day was that of politeness under an injury: an injury too great to be mentioned. This announcement meant a notice to quit, and they understood it as such. They discovered that they had an engagement to go to Lord Hainault the next morning, and stopped all conversation by persistent silence. The way in which they shook the dust off their feet, in stepping into their carriage next morning, and leaving this perfidious mansion, was, to say the least of it, "genteel." Yet they went, and there was peace; Silcote said, "triumph."

The Princess lived the rest of her life with her brother in peace. She was very gentle, quiet, and obliging, and it was only known to very few even in the household that anything was wrong. It only

showed itself in one way. She kept with her own hands a room ready for the arrival of poor Colonel Silcote. It was the old room he had had when a boy, and was hung round with his guns, swords, and cricket-bats. Here she waited for his arrival, coming into his room several times a day to see if everything was ready, and always looking in the first thing in the morning, to see if he had come in the night and was in bed. With this not unhappy delusion the time wore on with her peacefully, although he never came.

THE END.



